



BOOMERANG CLUB NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2019

SPRING WINE CLUB RELEASE

WINEMAKER'S SELECTION

2018 SENCILLO, VIOGNIER-CHARDONNAY (SONOMA COUNTY)

2016 GSP, ESTATE (SONOMA VALLEY)

2015 ZINFANDEL, SONOMA HILLSIDE VINEYARDS (SONOMA COUNTY)

2015 SYRAH, GRIFFIN'S LAIR (SONOMA COAST)

2015 SYRAH, ESTATE (SONOMA VALLEY)

2015 CABERNET SHIRAZ, GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE (SONOMA VALLEY)

OPTIONS FOR CUSTOM ORDERS

2018 ROSÉ, VIN GIRS OF SYRAH (SONOMA VALLEY)

NON VINTAGE **SHIRAZ** (SONOMA VALLEY)

2014 SYRAH, RESERVE CUVÉE ELLEN (SONOMA VALLEY)

2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, RANDOM RIDGE VINEYARD (MT. VEEDER, NAPA VALLEY)

2018 LATE HARVEST VIOGNIER, SALOMON VINEYARD (SONOMA VALLEY)

2015 PORT (SONOMA VALLEY)



Chris and his Dad, Bob, at Loxton Vineyard, Moorook, South Australia

Dear Club Member,

Although it's only spring, I'm impatient to begin pruning and planning new ideas for 2019. To satisfy the urge to get going on the 2019 harvest I got a preview by going to South Australia to see part of the harvest with my father. Despite retiring a little over a year ago, he is still involved in grape sampling for the new owner. I can easily see why he gets so much from this, it's not just the excitement of harvest but the feeling of being in a community of fellow growers and wineries working together to bring a product to market. When we harvest at night time, sitting up on top of the harvester some 12 feet off the ground, some nights you can see the lights of other growers on their harvesters all going through the same excitement of finally bringing the year's work to an end. This excitement is why I love being a part of the picking crew here at the winery. We pick by hand first thing in the morning; its cold and hard work and I often hear the crews working in nearby fields. There is a real sense of achievement and when we see that half ton bin full of near perfect fruit on the scale it's all worthwhile!

This business, however, requires a lot of patience so it is easy to appreciate the advantage of multi-generational family interests in artisan grape growing and winemaking. The demands of corporate ownership with expectations of a quick return on investment can complicate long term planning. My expectation of having certification for our sustainable farming practices is still in process and it is 12 months from when we started. As another example it will soon be 12 months into our experiment using the machine that recycles empty glass bottles into sand that we use to help break up clay soils, but I won't have wines to evaluate for several more years. In fact, some of the changes to our farming practices such as reducing irrigation and use of organic compost continue to show up. Perhaps the clearest example is with the new 2015 Estate Syrah release which I think is the best one made to date.

The California wine industry is excited by how big and how good the 2018 harvest has been. The big harvest has not just been with grapes though as I have an apple and several persimmon trees on the property and they were just loaded down with fruit. Due to a late harvest some of the wines have not completed the second fermentation (malo-lactic) and are harder to evaluate. Some of the earlier wines are now ready for bottling, and these do seem very good indeed and in this newsletter we have the first of this bountiful vintage with the Rosé and Sencillo.

While I have mentioned 3 of the new releases already, we have other releases from the outstanding, but small, 2015 harvest. The drought had the most impact on my Zinfandel program and the wines were combined into just one Sonoma Hillside Zinfandel. The Griffin's Lair Syrah is so limited it is a wine club exclusive. The McGraw Cabernet has all been used in the Grandfather's Cuvée, which is always one of my favorites, and to counter this shortfall I'm very proud to have as an option my very first Napa Cabernet from the Random Ridge. It is a fabulous wine from the great 2015 vintage perfect for any special occasion. Another special occasion wine is the 2014 Ellen Reserve Syrah that we released last year, this wine represents the best expression of Syrah that I make from here in Glen Ellen. For dessert we have very small quantities of the latest vintage of Salomon Vineyard Late Harvest Viognier and the last of the 2015 Port. Our mid-week drinking option is the non-vintage Shiraz with special case pricing. As always, you can change your order as you see fit and can also select from currently available wines instead of, or in addition to the new club offerings.

Cheers,



Chris Loxton

2018 SENCILLO



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 80% Viognier, 20% Chardonnay

pH: 3.24

Alcohol: 12.7%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 130 cases

Bottled unfinned & lightly filtered March 18, 2019

Release Price: \$24.00

As the summer temperatures increase I start thinking about lighter meals and this means lighter wines. Back in South Australia the wine to reach for was Riesling; traditionally made in a style without oak flavor or residual sugar and with lower alcohol. I love these wines but California Rieslings can have a perception problem as many are just a little sweet, fine for sitting on the deck, but not so food friendly and refreshing. This wine, inspired by the remembrance of the dry Rieslings is instead based on the Viognier grapes grown in front of the winery. Hand picked and only gently pressed to get the finest juice quality, it is made without using any yeast, without the use of new oak barrels and has no measurable sugars in the final wine (kept simple, hence the name "Sencillo").

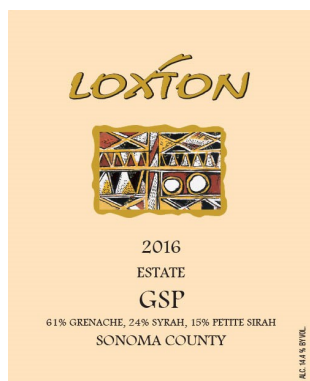
I planted Viognier in 2014 as it has multiple uses, white wine, great late harvest dessert wines, and it's even useful when added to Syrah during fermentation where it adds a lovely floral note. We are finding that growing Viognier is a little different than our other grape varieties. It appears to sunburn easily and this leads to more astringent wine so we need to keep a little more leaf cover for protection. Due to the very tight bunches this extra leaf cover can mean wet bunches so we need to be vigilant about mold. These tight bunches also don't allow much space for berry expansion (some are even pushed off the stems as the berries expand!) so we need to be careful with irrigation which can swell the berries. Finally, the big clusters mean high yields which we limit by reducing the allowed shoot numbers and having only 1 bunch per shoot. This year we will also clip off a few florets on each bunch to give space for the berries to expand and allow air flow for mold control. We expect this will mean even better wines in 2019, but as mentioned in the introduction, patience is required to find out!



The Viognier clone planted on our estate has big and crowded bunches

This is a wine to have during the warm days of summer. The Viognier gives wonderful peach and spice aromatics and the lower alcohol with nice acidity gives the wine freshness. The addition of Chardonnay adds more middle palate weight and fills out the finish. You might try this with grilled chicken or stir fry shrimp. I expect this wine will be at its best this Summer and for the next 12 months, but why wait!

2016 GSP - ESTATE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 61% Grenache, 24% Syrah, 15% Petite Sirah

pH: 3.55

Alcohol: 14.4%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 242 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered March 16, 2018

Release Price: \$30.00

I made my first wine under the Loxton label in 1996, the same year I visited the Rhone Valley in France. While most of the time was spent in the North where the only red grape is Syrah, I did spend a few days in the South where Grenache is king. When I visited the Chateauneuf du Pape region I was lucky enough to taste the individual components of the Vieux Telegraphe wine and I remember being shocked to find that I liked the Grenache more than the Syrah. It was one of three properties I visited and the thing that impressed me most was their attitude of including us into the winemaker fraternity. I hadn't expected the people we visited, all very passionate and famous, would be so giving with their time and hospitality to our group who were just at the beginning of their careers. Rather than jealously guarding their heritage, they were inspiring us to be the best we could be.

The vineyards of Chateauneuf are based on Grenache, almost always with other grapes to make a complete and compelling story. There are 13 different allowed grape varieties, although most places use just 3-4 of the main ones. The resurgence of interest in these Southern Rhone wines has been mirrored in other areas and I joined that group in 2013. Sonoma Valley is proving to be a great place for these Grenache based blends and it was an excellent decision to graft some of our vines to Grenache and Petite sirah.

Last year the GSP blend was chosen by a panel of Sommeliers to be presented at the Signature Sonoma Valley Icon tasting. The new version this year has again been chosen so I will be one of 10 vintners featured at the kick-off celebration for the Signature event.

The new vintage again has Grenache as the dominant player, bringing acidity and cherry fruit, while Syrah adds richness and spice and Petite sirah (hence GSP) adds color and structure. Inspired by Rhone traditions, oak is used sparingly and the blended wine aged in a 500 gallon oak Foudre to maintain freshness. This is my 4th GSP blend and is the most forward and voluptuous at this release stage. Wonderful sweet cherry fruit with nice tannins on the finish. The use of multiple varieties gives a level of complexity beyond just fruitiness and this allows it to match a wide variety of foods from salmon to chicken, pork and mushroom based foods. Enjoyable now I think it should improve for the next 2-3 years and hold for 2-3 more after that.



The GSP components come from adjacent rows planted in one block on the estate

2015 ZINFANDEL - SONOMA HILLSIDE VINEYARDS



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 100% Zinfandel (40% Estate, 37% Rossi Ranch, 23% Stonetree Vineyard)

pH: 3.79

Alcohol: 14.5%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 171 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered August 30, 2016

Release Price: \$30.00

I grow about half the grapes I need here on the Estate and then buy the other half. To ensure continuity of style, the purchased grapes are long term contracts (some handshakes) where I have my rows, some control of farming practices and total control of picking decisions. For the Zinfandel program I have just a half acre here on the estate, get all of Stonetree Vineyard in the Mayacamas mountains and from Rossi Ranch here in Glen Ellen, my allocation in 2015 came from the area known as Heritage Block 6.

The issue with this approach, and this applies in all agriculture, is some years have heavy crops and some years are light. In planning sales and marketing this can cause real headaches. Some wineries want contracts based on tons of fruit, thereby guaranteeing their supply, but the growers hate this as some years they have fruit left over while in other years they cannot supply the contact. There is pressure to relax the regulations on how much fruit from a different year or variety can be blended in to smooth out the supply. I'm not in favor of this solution though, as it seems deceptive to find out the wine you bought is only mostly from the variety and year on the label!

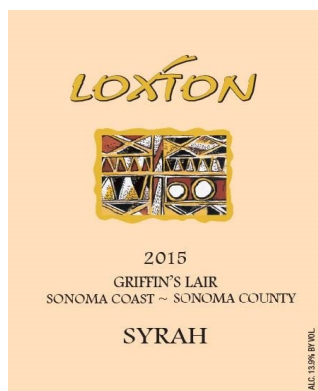


At Rossi, each winery has designated blocks. In 2015, my fruit was from Heritage Block 6.

I had this supply issue in 2015 when yields plummeted due to the 3rd year of a particularly bad drought. The Stonetree vineyard, on thin mountain soils with little ability to receive supplemental water, gave us just 2 barrels of wine, down from the 11 it produced in 2013. Younger vines at Rossi Ranch were aggressively fruit thinned in order to keep the vines healthy and here on the estate we kept yields low to minimize water use. The net result was very little Zinfandel and while each of these were excellent wines, none by themselves would have been enough to offer to the wine club. I found that blending all three made a wine more interesting than the individual wines and now had enough volume for wine club release.

As expected from such small yields, the wine has great color, some spice and raspberry fruit and reflects the drought year with great fruit, good acidity and very good tannin structure. There is an intensity about the wine that would make it best with grilled meats. Should improve for 1-2 years and hold for another 5.

2015 SYRAH - GRIFFIN'S LAIR



Appellation: Sonoma Coast

Blend: 97% Syrah, 3% Viognier

pH: 3.67

Alcohol: 13.9%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 84 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered August 30, 2016

Release Price: \$32.00

In the 20+ years that I've been making my own wines I've worked with quite a few vineyards across Sonoma County. Without being really aware of it I have gravitated to vineyards where I like the owners, often people who have what we might call "lifestyle" vineyards. They are people who had a successful career and then decided to move to Sonoma County and start a vineyard. The drive to be successful in business is the very reason that made them successful grape growers as they are driven by the quest for perfection. There would be no better example of this than Jim and Joan Griffin.

After a successful business in industrial device manufacturing, Jim and Joan (who had been together since high school) decided to move to Petaluma and start a vineyard on a property that also had a small equestrian operation. The romance of having a vineyard is quickly replaced by the reality of the hard work and risk hidden behind the "glamour". I suppose there are many things you can throw infinite amounts of money at, but vineyards and horses would certainly be close to the top of the list and they had both!

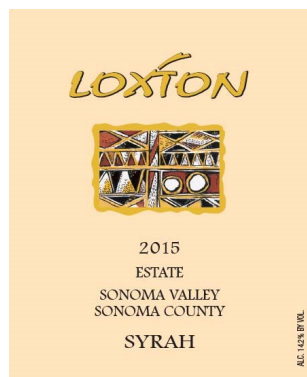


The romance of horses and grapes is hard to beat!

On the plus side, because of the passion and drive to be the best, the fruit of all this labor can be very good indeed. This doesn't happen by itself and in the quest to grow better grapes, the Griffin's have been innovative. They have been organic, even tried biodynamic farming for a while, have used composts and teas to improve soils, planted Alyssum to encourage beneficial insects, even used a laser system to scare away birds. These are fanatical growers and their fruit is in high demand. I also make a Pinot noir from their vineyard, but I think Syrah might be the best variety for this excellent site.

Joan also planted a few rows of Viognier and once again I've used a small amount to co-ferment with their Syrah grapes in the same tradition that is often done in the Northern Rhone. It adds a floral note to the wine, making it just a little more complex and interesting. Due to the very small yields, this is only available for wine club members, and is a fitting tribute to the Griffin's legacy in their second chosen career. It has intensity of flavor while keeping alcohol levels fairly modest. This makes it a wonderful wine at the dinner table and to hold for another 5+ years.

2015 SYRAH - ESTATE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.61

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 218 cases

Bottled unfined and lightly filtered March 27, 2017

Release Price: \$35.00

I have extolled the advantages of having Estate grown fruit and the control of the grape growing in previous newsletters. But there is a downside. Spring is one of the critical times of the growing season and the first green leaves in mid March are highly susceptible to frost damage. Each shoot normally has 2 tiny bunches and when damaged by frost we can lose the crop. Our good friends at Shumahi Ranch only a quarter mile away on Dunbar Road don't have or need frost protection while our site is probably the most frost prone in the Valley! To protect our crop we use a pulsed mist system that coats the leaves and any ice formation then protects the leaves and fruit. This method doesn't use much water, but the thin water lines easily ice up.

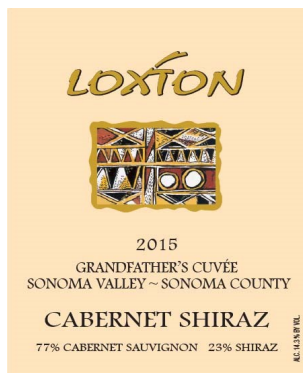
There is an alarm in my bedroom that comes on when the temperature drops to 36°F during the frost season that can last until mid April and I need to wake and make a decision whether to protect the crop while also not wasting water or promoting molds by unnecessarily getting the leaves wet. Wind speed, time until sunrise and rate of temperature drop are all factors. I'm never irritated if I do have to get out of bed though. For one thing I'm saving tens of thousands of dollars of fruit and that's not a bad nights work! The other is I know I'm not alone (misery loves company?). I always see a car driving around Kunde vineyard across the road and it isn't long before the Wellington crew next door turn on their over-head sprinklers. When I'm done its usually time for the Pagani Ranch to turn on their wind machines, a signal that sleep is done and its time for coffee. We might all be using different methods, but are all in this together to save our crops and that makes the cold less chilling.



Nothing glamorous about fixing frost protection hoses in January

This 2015 Estate Syrah is perhaps the best reason for what we do. Tasting this for the first time since bottling I can't remember the sleepless nights or cold, only that it has become one of my favorite wines I have made. It has the most fruit intensity and richness of the four Estate Syrahs to date which is a result of both a great year and movement to more sustainable farming practices. The red and black fruit flavors hide the tannin structure and oak so they stay in the background. While it is drinking wonderfully now, I expect that it still will be improving for another 10 years.

2015 CABERNET SHIRAZ - GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Shiraz

pH: 3.70

Alcohol: 14.3%

Closure: Cork Finish

Production: 257 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered July 19, 2017

Release Price: \$35.00

In the last week of January I went to San Francisco to attend the 14th in a series of annual tastings put on by the Union Des Grands Crus de Bordeaux. It's a great event where 80+ of the Chateaus of Bordeaux send principles to show off their new releases. They do this in 5-6 cities across the US and I try to go every time I have the chance. The interesting thing is none of the red wines are 100% Cabernet sauvignon, they are always blends. The Bordelais have found through hundreds of years that by itself, Cabernet can be rather tannic and sometimes a little thin in the middle palate. Blend in a little Merlot and perhaps even some Cabernet franc and the wines really sing.

There are some take home lessons in these mega tastings. The first is rather obvious; take a spit cup and don't drink too many wines! The second is not so obvious. In the crowded and noisy atmosphere of a walk around tasting, the wines that tend to stand out are those that are obvious. They jump from the glass, almost eager to please, ready to show off their color, oak, richness and alcohol. The more difficult wines to evaluate are those that are elegant and well balanced. I found myself coming back to two in particular (Talbot and Lagrange if you have to know!), asking to try them again. Away from the maddening crowds I found the flavors complex and layered with taste sensations that were harmonious and long. This is, in fact, the style of wine I aspire to make.

Grandfather's Cuvée uses the Australian approach of blending in Syrah with the Cabernet rather than the Bordelais approach, but the goal is still the same. The Syrah fills in the middle palate and softens some of the tannins to make the whole more seamless and complete. The Cabernet, as always, is from the McGraw vineyard to the west of the winery and the Syrah component is from here on the estate. Given the low yields in 2015 I chose to bottle only the blend and not bottle a very small amount of Cabernet by itself as I usually do. This version, the 11th of the series, reminds me a little of the 2009. It has the obvious Cabernet fruit flavors, but a middle palate richness that cries out for a good steak or something grilled. Drinking very well now, it should continue to evolve for another 5-7 years in good cellaring conditions.



Hand shoveling Cabernet which must be handled as carefully as possible because of its tannins

2018 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Estate Syrah • pH: 3.24 • Alc: 13.5% • 270 cases • Screwcap
Bottled lightly fined and filtered, March 18th, 2019 • Release Price:\$18**

My Rosé style has evolved since the first one in 2001, but it has always been made with Syrah and has never had any residual sugar. I have deliberately lightened the style beginning about 8 years ago, wanting more freshness and delicacy with a little less alcohol. Although often thought of as a summer wine, I find that I've been enjoying Rosés all year round. It is such a versatile food wine from arctic char to salad I find no reason to restrict its use. If you have had my Rosé before, this is very similar to the ones made in the last 3 years and is my best selling wine in summer months. Don't wait too long!

SHIRAZ

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah • pH: 3.56 • Alc: 14.1% • 80 cases • Screwcap
Bottled unfined and lightly filtered • Wine Club Price:\$18 (25% case discount)**

Every now and again I bottle up some selected barrels from my Syrah program with the Shiraz name (what Australians call Syrah). I like having a wine to offer for everyday occasions as I find that during the busy summer season at the end of the day I'm just not ready for one of those "special occasion" wines, but I still want something made with care and attention. While it might be financially prudent to buy less expensive grapes, instead I just make a barrel selection of wine I've already made. It makes my best wines even better and provides an option for people to add to their wine club order. For drinking over the next few years.

2014 SYRAH, RESERVE CUVÉE ELLEN

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah (50% Estate, 50% Rossi Ranch) • pH: 3.49 • Alc: 14.3%
146 cases • Screwcap • Bottled unfined and lightly filtered, July 11, 2016 • Release Price: \$40**

This wine was released in the fall of last year, but is rarely poured in the tasting room, kept mostly for our "Reserve Tastings". No reserve was made in 2015 due to the smaller harvest. Labeling a wine as "Reserve" should mean something and for me it's the best of the best. Even more so when it is a tribute to my grandmother Ellen, so the Cuvée Ellen is the best wine I can make from Syrah grown here in Glen Ellen. This wine truly fits that wish and is a wine that can be enjoyed now or can be kept for up to 10 years in good cellaring conditions. It is a barrel selection of the best lots, with three from here on the Estate and three from Rossi Ranch, chosen for its intensity, elegance and structure. I feel this is the best Reserve Syrah I've made.

2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, RANDOM RIDGE

**Mt. Veeder, Napa Valley • 100% Cabernet Sauvignon • pH: 3.67 • Alc: 14.4% • 99 cases produced
Bottled unfined and lightly filtered, July 9th, 2017 • Release Price:\$45**

When I started as Assistant at Wellington Vineyards I helped make wine for Bill Hawley, grape grower on Mount Veeder and California Wine Connoisseur magazine "Surfer Dude of the Year". The wheel has come full circle and starting in 2015 I began to make his wines again, giving me access to a small amount of his fantastic fruit for my own use. This is mountain Napa Cabernet, a wine that will age wonderfully, full of the brushy notes of Mount Veeder but made in my style of less alcohol and less oak than seems to be in vogue. It was a wonderful year to make my first Napa Cabernet and I hope it will age as well as the 1995 version we opened at Bill's place last year.

2018 LATE HARVEST VIOGNIER, SALOMON VINEYARD

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Viognier • pH: 3.75 • Alc: 11.5% • 15% residual sugar • 70 cases produced
Bottled lightly fined and lightly filtered, March 18th, 2019 • Release Price:\$25 • 375ml**

I've been making a great white dessert wine from Bob and Linda Salomon's grapes for some years. The grapes are picked 3-4 weeks after picking for dry white wine and then part way through fermentation the wine is filtered and sterile bottled. A wine for fruit based desserts.

Spring Release Party

April 7th, 2-5 pm

Join us to kick off spring with a wine country picnic! The flowers are blooming, the vines are awake, and the sun is shining. Take in the beauty of springtime in Sonoma while enjoying the new Spring releases along with a delicious picnic lunch prepared by local Glen Ellen chefs at Wine Country Vine Dining. Chat with Chris about the new releases and get the inside scoop on how the 2018 vintage is coming along. Kick back with a glass of your favorite Loxton wine, relax and take in one of the best views in Sonoma Valley!

Please RSVP to winery@loxtonwines.com or 707-935-7221 by March 31st

Members: No Charge, Guests: \$10



We leave our seasonal creek in its natural state to encourage wildlife on the property and it is a privilege to share our vineyards with so many different animals. A highlight was catching a glimpse of this beautiful Mountain Lion who was identified by ACR conservation group, who is studying our region's mountain lions, as P1 a mature female the program has been tracking since 2016 who happened to be the mother of new kittens!

SHIPPING RATES							
Ground (5-7 Business Days)							2 DAY AIR
# of Bot- tles	CA,NV	AZ,ID NM,OR,WA	CO,MT,WY	KS,ND NE,OK,SD	AR,IA,IL LA MN,MO,TX	AL,CT,DC,DE,FL,GA,IN KY,MA,MD,ME,MI,MS NC,NJ,NH,NY,OH,PA,RI SC,TN,VA,VT,WI,WV	AK,HI
6	21	23	33	36	40	43	77
7	23	25	37	42	46	51	84
8	25	27	39	43	48	53	91
9	26	29	40	45	50	55	102
12*	29	33	35	40	45	50	120
18	38	45	60	70	80	85	200
2+ cases	25 each	27 each	35 each	40 each	45 each	50 each	115 each
<p>*Special club pricing applied to purchases of 12+ bottles Additional charge will apply if address is incorrect or package is undeliverable resulting in redirection or return</p>							