



## BOOMERANG CLUB NEWSLETTER SPRING 2020

### SPRING WINE CLUB RELEASE

#### WINEMAKER'S SELECTION

- 2019 SENCILLO, VIOGNIER-RIESLING** (SONOMA COUNTY)
- 2017 GSP, ESTATE** (SONOMA VALLEY)
- 2016 ZINFANDEL, ROSSI RANCH** (SONOMA VALLEY)
- 2016 SYRAH, ESTATE** (SONOMA VALLEY)
- 2016 SYRAH, GRIFFIN'S LAIR** (PETALUMA GAP)
- 2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, MCGRAW VINEYARD** (SONOMA VALLEY)

#### OPTIONS FOR CUSTOM ORDERS

ALL WINES FROM OUR WEBSITE ARE AVAILABLE, BUT THE FOLLOWING ARE PARTICULARLY HIGHLIGHTED

- 2017 CHARDONNAY, HAWK HILL VINEYARD** (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY)
- 2019 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH** (SONOMA VALLEY)
- SONOMA REDS - LOT 13** (SONOMA COUNTY)
- 2015 PORT** (SONOMA VALLEY)



Daffodils herald the arrival of Spring, the new releases and the start of the new vineyard season

Dear Friend of Loxton,

I write this newsletter just before taking my trip to Australia in mid February to visit my family and see harvest at what was our family vineyard. It will be interesting to see what has happened with all the fires. My wine making nephew was in the fire area of the Adelaide Hills and 1/3 of the vineyards there were damaged. Several wineries were also lost and it remains to be seen how much of the wine will suffer from smoke taint issues. Areas in Victoria and New South Wales will probably fare even worse. I'm reading more and more in our industry magazines about strategies to deal with our weather extremes. Even in Bordeaux they have recently approved some additional grapes varieties from Portugal and Italy that have the ability to handle warmer weather better than current approved varieties. I suspect that we will all be reading even more about these preparations and strategies in coming years.

Another topic that seems to be coming up in industry and in public forums is "natural wine". I feel a bit confused by this as all wine I know is made when yeast converts sugar into alcohol and CO2 and isn't that natural? There are some that are taking the natural wine movement to an extreme view, advocating no use of the preservative sulfite, no use of machine harvested fruit and no additions of any kind. I expect that these people own no car and prefer to drink wine from goatskins, but I can appreciate that they have a point. Wine made in factories and augmented with many of the additives from an ever increasing approved list so that it no longer reflects the vineyard, the weather and the viticulture is just a fermented beverage and isn't something that sparks my interest. Lately I've become fascinated by the program on Netflix called "Chef's Table" and I find that I'm inspired by the chefs featured on each episode. I don't care much about the minutiae of how they do what they do (charcoal or gas burners, for example), but the inspiration comes from *why* they do what they do. It usually involves finding the best local ingredients and then making sure to highlight what they have. By the end of the episode I always find myself thinking about my own winemaking. How can I bring out the best of my land and farming and heritage to have a product that truly reflects the grape and what I like?

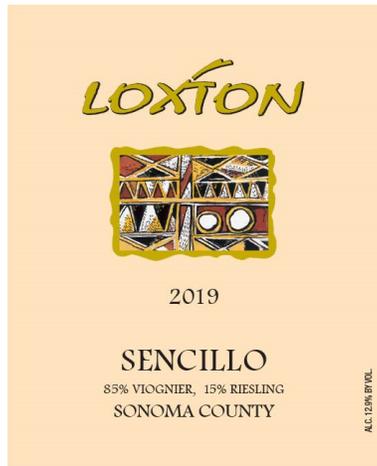
I have heard winemakers say that they do as little as possible, but this is misleading. After all, winemakers all have different techniques such as picking earlier or later, using whole bunches of grapes in the fermenter, oak barrels for aging or not, and these decisions are made to highlight a particular aspect of the incoming fruit. They are just tools to bring out a particular wine style that the "terroir" provides. It is also well known that farming methods have dramatic effects on how the wines taste. But it disrespects the incoming grapes by adding color, or tannins or sweetness to mask what the vineyard and vintage gives. I have to admit though that this is the luxury of a passionate small producer working with outstanding vineyard sources. There still has to be a place for mass produced wines with mass appeal otherwise wine becomes too exclusive. My thinking about natural wine has thus evolved. My pledge is to aspire to "natural wine" using the techniques I have at hand to make a wine true to its grape variety, its vineyard, how it is farmed and the vintage year.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name below it.

Chris Loxton

## 2019 SENCILLO



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 85% Viognier, 15% Riesling

pH: 3.40

Alcohol: 12.9%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 128 cases

Bottled unfinned & lightly filtered March 16th 2020

Release Price: \$24.00

The concept of a white wine with lower alcohol and crisp flavors to enjoy in Summer with lighter foods seemed to have resonated with club members last year and the wine sold out very quickly. I've repeated the exercise in 2019, again basing the wine on the estate Viognier. As the vines are maturing I have noticed more intensity in grape flavor and this has allowed me to increase the percentage of Viognier in the blend and for this wine it has reached 85%. While the remainder of the blend in the '18 version was Chardonnay, this year I have used Riesling. Early in Summer I was approached by the Willis's who own and operate a B and B in Santa Rosa to see if I would make a Riesling from their vines. The idea was to be able to offer their guests a wine that they could enjoy on the deck while looking out over the vines. The concept was basically what I have for my Sencillo and I love Riesling and the decision was made!

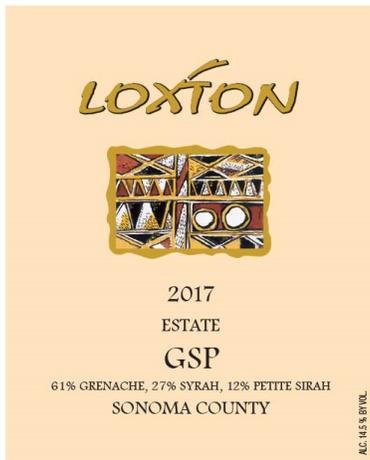
Riesling is often misunderstood as a variety just for semi-sweet wines and this is a pity as the grape has the ability to make wines with great flavors at relatively modest alcohol levels. Last Summer, I did a winemaker dinner in Geneva, New York. It gave me the chance to visit the Finger Lakes wine area and had several dry Riesling wines that were fabulous, reminding me of the lovely dry Rieslings I grew up with in South Australia.

As the Riesling vines are very young, the amount of fruit was very limited and I found that it was best used to complement the wine from the Estate Viognier. In both cases, only the first fraction of juice obtained in pressing the grapes was included, and the remainder returned to the vineyard as it tends to have some astringency. While this year's varietal mix is slightly different from last year's, the winemaking remains the same. No new oak barrels, no second fermentation and minimal aging in older oak barrels in order to preserve freshness. The Viognier adds some ginger and stone fruit notes, the Riesling adding classic lime and mineral characters. This is a wine to enjoy with grilled fish or pork, or to have with chicken salad and lighter meals. Maybe even just sitting out on the deck on a warm evening! It is a wine that is best consumed this Summer and into early next year as there is no reason to keep it longer than that.



The Gables B&B, a great place to enjoy a Summer white wine

## 2017 GSP - ESTATE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 61% Grenache, 27% Syrah, 12% Petite Sirah

pH: 3.60

Alcohol: 14.5%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 206 cases

Bottled unfined & lightly filtered March 18th, 2019

Release Price: \$32.00

Although I knew that Grenache was very sensitive to rain during bloom time, I didn't expect that hot temperatures could be just as devastating. These weather events disrupt the fertilization process and the berries do not develop, a process we call "shatter". In May of 2019, just as flowering started, we had temperatures over 100°F and it wasn't until a few weeks later that we were able to see just how much damage we had experienced. Some bunches were just 20 berries or so and this led to extremely slow picking when we had lots of bunches, but just no volume of fruit. Quantities of 2019 GSP will be very limited and I won't have enough to fill my oak tank where I would normally age the wine after blending.

To avoid this going forward I've decided that in late Spring this year I'm going to graft over a little more of the Estate Syrah to change the grape to Grenache. This will also give me the opportunity to work with more Grenache, possibly even having enough to make it as a single varietal wine. There have been some very exciting things happening with Grenache here and in other countries as younger winemakers are re-discovering the variety and its not the same as our grandfather's wines.

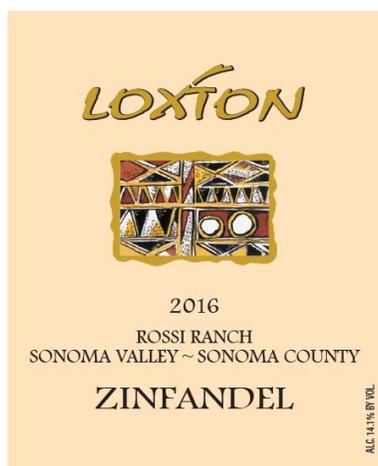
Grafting is an example of the highly skilled work done by my vineyard manager Rafael and his team. Dormant canes from the desired variety are collected at pruning and then kept in cold storage and in late Spring a bud is grafted into the stump of the host vine. The root system is retained and when this graft "takes", the vine is re-established in one year and we should see some production in the following year.

In the meantime, we have plenty of the 2017 GSP. It follows very closely the style of the '16 wine, again using estate fruit blended in Spring and then aged 12 months in a 500 gallon oak "Foudre". The Grenache bring lots of cherry fruit and Syrah adding depth of flavor while Petite sirah adds color and structure. A wine to enjoy now and for the next 5 years. Great with pork dishes, stews and savory meals.



Grenache bunches that experienced shatter while flowering during the 2019 Season.

## 2016 ZINFANDEL - ROSSI RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Zinfandel

pH: 3.87

Alcohol: 14.1%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 149 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered August 29, 2017

Release Price: \$30.00

I've been a big fan of Rossi Ranch Zinfandel ever since tasting them for the first time during my first winery internship in Sonoma County. So, when I was offered some additional fruit in the harvest of 2016 I jumped at the chance. The 2015 wine was all from the Heritage block 7, and I got this again in 2016, but I also got some from Blocks 3 and 4. Picked just a few days apart, the wines were quite different. While that from the newer blocks was more traditional red fruit notes like raspberry, that from Block 7 was more black fruit, more brambly and more textural and rich. The red fruits wine was used in the Hillside Zinfandel released last Fall, and the original Block 7 was kept back for this vineyard designated wine.

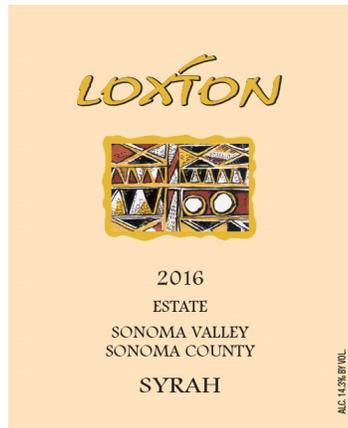
As the blocks are separated by only a tractor avenue you might wonder why the wines are so different. I've noticed a slight difference in the soils, but like most old vine Zinfandel vineyards, there is a slightly different mix of varieties in the blocks. Old California Zinfandel vineyards are almost never single varietal plantings. There probably isn't a single reason for this and I've heard old timers didn't want to have "all their eggs in one basket" in case of unusual weather conditions at harvest or flowering. But I've also heard that it was just random planting with whatever budwood they had on hand. Its important to remember that they didn't make varietal wines in those days, it was just "red" or "white". Whatever the reason, I just know that the wine I make from Block 7 is different from the wine from its neighbor.



Only an avenue separates my vineyard blocks but the wines

This vineyard designated wine is a bigger wine than the Fall release of the Hillside Vineyards Zinfandel and it can stand up to the heavier grilled foods of Summer. Lots of black fruit notes with great palate weight and texture, it is drinking very well now but should age for another 3-5 years. I have such a soft spot for Zinfandel as it can be so delicious yet doesn't get the respect and attention that it deserves.

## 2016 SYRAH - ESTATE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.68

Alcohol: 14.3%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 257 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered March 16th,  
2017

Release Price: \$35.00

I really like working in the vineyard as it makes me feel like I'm doing something to help me make better wine. The first step in the process is the vine pruning which is done in late winter/early Spring. This sets up the balance of the vine so that we have enough leaves to ripen the crop and it also sets the crop load of the vine. While it can be miserable if its cold and windy or rainy, on a nice sunny day in early Spring it can be rather therapeutic with green grass and flowers and the sounds of robins and red winged blackbirds. It can be almost too therapeutic and with so many decisions to be made it can slow me down to where I get little done!

The problem is that in order to have the vineyard uniform in ripening, pruning must be completed in a few days so that all the vines are at the same stage of development. I have 5.5 acres of vines on the Estate and that's almost 6000 vines, so this is where my vineyard manager Rafael Oseguera comes to the rescue with his team of professionals.

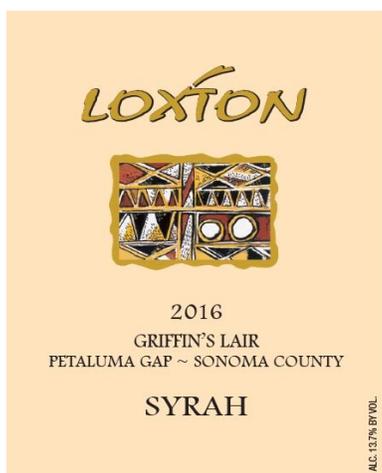


Our vineyard crew finishing up a hard day working on the estate in Summer

Its an amazing thing to watch his crew do their work. An experienced pruner looks at the overall vigor of the vine and then prunes accordingly to leave the right amount of 1 year old wood on the vine, occasionally breaking the pruning rules when they realize that the vine will start to grow out into the tractor rows. They look at how the vine will grow in the current year and also anticipate what will happen in future years. This is a highly skilled job and many of Rafael's crew have been with him for many years. During the year, the crews come back a number of times, thinning branches to allow more air flow and removing excess fruit. While we can do "maintenance" work, we slowly get behind and then the professionals come in once again. Each of these passes requires many decisions and again requires a high degree of skill. While the weather and soil are vitally important, it can all be undone when the vineyard is not farmed properly.

Tasting the '16 estate Syrah makes me happy that I leave many of these crucial steps up to the experts. More rainfall in '16 compared to the previous 3 years shows with less tannin and acid than those wines yet still having the same concentration. It is the most forward of all Estate Syrah wines so far and is drinking very well now but should age for another 5-8 years.

## 2016 SYRAH - GRIFFIN'S LAIR



Appellation: Petaluma Gap

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.69

Alcohol: 13.7%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 153 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered March 16, 2018

Release Price: \$35.00

I love visiting wine shops and can easily spend hours looking at the selections in a good one. I know almost all the good ones in the bay area and when I went to one of these looking for holiday supplies I saw a bottle of Griffin's Lair Syrah from another producer that I haven't seen before. Selling grapes to a number of different wineries is a good strategy in many ways, even though it would probably make life easier to just have one winery client. Dealing with different personalities all with different ideas on what to do and when to pick probably requires a degree in therapy, but is a clever marketing tool. It gets the name of the vineyard in front of a much bigger audience as the different wineries sell in different market segments and locations and might be reviewed in different wine magazines.

Some years ago, Jim and Joan Griffin invited those of us who make Syrah from their vineyard to lunch and to show off our wines. The styles and production methods were all slightly different even though our fruit was all grown in close proximity. When winemakers get together there are lots of ideas and it has inspired me to experiment with co-fermentation using a small amount of Viognier and also with some whole bunches of grapes in the fermentation tanks with the Griffin's fruit.

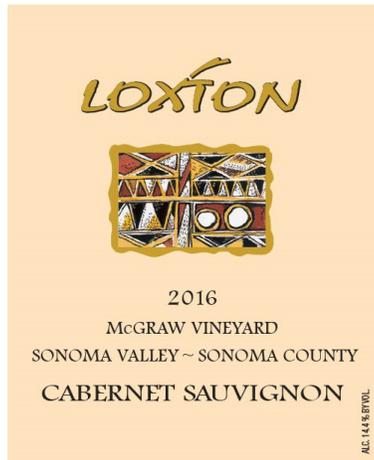
I don't really know which approach is the correct one, but it is critically important to have the knowledge to adapt to vintage conditions. 2016 was a great vintage in Sonoma and with great fruit I've gone back to the basics. 100% Syrah fruit, no whole bunches and less new oak than in the drought years. It showcases more faithfully what a great vineyard can do in a great year when ingredients outweigh techniques. Complexity comes from using several different clones (some Alban #1, mostly 877) and using only native yeasts for fermentation.

This wine, like those others made using the Griffins fruit, shows black fruit characters, graphite notes and great color. It does this all while having relatively modest alcohol levels. A wine to have with lamb or other meats, with stews or any mushroom dishes. Ready to drink now I also expect it to age gracefully for another 5-8 years.



Griffin's Lair vineyard designated wines made by different winemakers is wonderful "research".

# 2016 CABERNET SAUVIGNON - MCGRAW VINEYARD



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon

pH: 3.72

Alcohol: 14.4%

Closure: Cork Finish

Production: 147 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered August 22, 2018

Release Price: \$35.00

Its funny how smell and memory are linked. I smell the 2016 McGraw Cabernet and I'm transported back to the time just before grad school when dad and his best friend Harley and I made some wine from their vineyards. The unmistakable aroma of Cabernet; a wonderful mix of cassis, mulberries and leaves. We didn't make wine after that as I was off at University, but I found it again when dad came out to visit me in Arizona. We drove to Napa and Sonoma on that visit and ended up at Chateau Montelena not really realizing how famous they had become. Although we had not arranged anything, they were gracious enough to show us around and I got the opportunity to climb up on a ladder and smell the '83 Cabernet while it was fermenting. I'm sure you wouldn't be able to do this now, insurance and liability concerns would have stopped that, but there it was: that distinctive aroma of Cabernet. Chemists might be able to tell us that this is a class of compounds called pyrazines, also found in bell peppers, but to us it was the smell of magic. Instantly back to '77 in Harley's shed and our grapes fermenting in concrete tanks (way before such things were cutting edge as they are today) and pressed with an ancient wooden press. The stuff of memories.



Fermenting cabernet grapes have such a distinctive aroma.

I love that aroma, but don't see it as often as I would like. Pick the grapes too early and the leafy note becomes bell peppers and as much as I love roasted red bell peppers I just don't want to drink them. Pick too late and cabernet loses its distinctiveness and just becomes ripe black fruit and they all taste the same. Picked just right though and you have the ripe tannins and wine structure while still retaining the flavor of Cabernet. A glass of this '16 McGraw cabernet starts the journey back to that place in my memory. Not exactly the same of course, since new French oak barrels were not a possibility in those days. Here they just buttress the wine, still letting the vineyard and grape speak. 2016 was a great year for Cabernet in Sonoma and Napa and I'm confident that this wine will richly reward those who cellar it for up to 10 years, even though it is ready for drinking now.

## **2019 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH**

**Sonoma Valley • Sonoma County • pH: 3.50 • Alc: 13.0% • 225 cases • Screwcap  
Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, March 16th, 2020 • Release Price: \$18**

The newest iteration of the Estate Syrah Rosé one of the best. This wine has been remarkably consistent in the last 5 years, needing no residual sugar to give it weight, but instead relying on great fruit and fermentation in well used Chardonnay barrels to give complexity without oak flavor. This style of rosé, light and fresh yet full of flavor is such a great wine to have with a wide variety of meals like chicken salad, salmon or many pasta dishes or just sitting on the deck in the Summer.

## **SONOMA REDS LOT 13**

**Sonoma County • 42% Cabernet sauvignon, 43% Syrah, 12% Zinfandel, 3% Others • pH: 3.64 •  
Alc: 14.0% • 210 cases • Screwcap  
Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, August 26, 2019 • Release Price: \$19**

The Lot 12 Sonoma Reds sold out in less than 3 months. Fortunately, we have moved up the release of the Lot 13 and it is in a very similar style. For club members wanting an excellent everyday drinking wine, the last few years with big harvests of particularly high quality have been great news! The big harvests have meant that I've had excess production and have some excellent wines to choose as blending options for the Reds program. As with the Lot 12, the basis has been Cabernet sauvignon, then Syrah for richness, Zinfandel for fruitiness and small amounts of Grenache, Viognier and Petite sirah. Case discounts bring the price down to make a great choice for mid-week drinking that still has depth and complexi-

## **2017 CHARDONNAY, HAWK HILL VINEYARD**

**Russian River Valley • 100% Chardonnay • pH: 3.35 • Alc: 13.1% • 239 cases produced •  
Screwcap  
Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, July 23, 2018 • Release Price:\$32**

A white wine option is the Fall offering of '17 Chardonnay from Hawk Hill vineyard. This is a crisp Chardonnay without heavy oak influence. Its very easy to see how the Sonoma Coast area of Freestone has become one of the most sought after areas for Chardonnay. Wines from the area have an intensity and palate weight yet maintain enough acidity to work even with rich dishes like pork and turkey. While others may be rushing to the area, this is my 17th wine from this outstanding vineyard.

## **2015 PORT**

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah, Estate • pH: 3.70 • Alc: 18.2% Sugar 9.3% • 297 cases  
Cork Finish • 500mL • Bottled unfinned and unfiltered, August 29, 2016 • Release Price: \$30**

Port can be a very traditional way to finish up the meal with dessert or cheese but many are too sweet. I have always used Syrah for my ports but have always tried to have enough acid and tannin in the wine to keep it all balanced. Its still a wine to have in smaller quantities, but the great thing is that the wine keeps for up to a month once opened. Try this with chocolate desserts or with a sharp cheese.

**Spring Release Party  
April 5th, 2-5 pm**

Join us to celebrate Spring while you sample the new releases alongside some delicious local fare! Catch up with Chris and get the inside scoop on the 2019 vintage. As usual, we will have the makings for a light lunch and Spring is a great chance to have wine and something to eat and just enjoy Sonoma and a beautiful view.



With an annual production of only 550 and 150 bottles respectively, Década and Angelica dessert wines are hand bottled by the staff.

<b>SHIPPING RATES</b>							
Ground (5-7 Business Days)							2 DAY AIR
# of Bottles	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 align="center"><b>*Subsidized pricing applied to purchases of 12+ bottles</b> Additional charge will apply if address is incorrect or package is undeliverable resulting in redirection or return</p>							

Please RSVP to [winery@loxtonwines.com](mailto:winery@loxtonwines.com) or 707-935-7221 by March 31st  
Members: No Charge, Guests: \$10