

# LOXTON



## BOOMERANG CLUB NEWSLETTER

### SPRING 2016

#### SPRING WINE CLUB RELEASE

##### WINEMAKER'S SELECTION

**2013 ZINFANDEL, ROSSI RANCH (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2013 GSP (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2012 SYRAH, ROSSI RANCH (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2012 SYRAH, KICK RANCH (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2009 SYRAH, CUVÉE ELLEN (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2012 CABERNET SHIRAZ, GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE (SONOMA VALLEY)**

##### OPTIONS FOR CUSTOM ORDERS

**2013 CHARDONNAY, HAWK HILL VINEYARD (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY)**

**2015 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2013 PINOT NOIR, GRIFFIN'S LAIR (SONOMA COAST)**

**SONOMA REDS - LOT 9 (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2014 LATE HARVEST ZINFANDEL (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2015 LATE HARVEST VIOGNIER (SONOMA VALLEY)**



Checking the Cabernet in Grandfather's block the day of picking, Loxton Vineyard, South Australia, 2016

Dear Club Member,

I just love the Spring in Sonoma! The county goes green, the flowers are out and the vineyards are perhaps at their most beautiful. Without the leaves it is easier to see the shapes of the vines and they range from the stand alone old Zinfandels with their classic craggy shapes to the neatly manicured rows of today's vineyard style. It also allows us to see if we did a good job last Summer spreading out the canopy to give just the right amount of space and sunlight to each bunch to promote optimum ripening. I always get impatient as the daylight lengthens and when we get a nice warm day I just can't wait to get started in the vineyard for the new year. We need to prune by Mid-March, I've got replacement vines to plant and I'll need to decide what to do with the first few grapes I'll get from the new vines we planted in 2014. With the new clone of Syrah should I make Rose, or use some to see how it turns out as red wine, and with the Viognier can I make a little late harvest or add it to my Sonoma White? Will the organic compost we added last Fall help the weak areas of the vineyard? I just need to wait and let nature take its course and the vineyard will tell me in due time.

If you think about it, vineyard people need to have lots of patience and it helps to be an optimist. If nature co-operates and we pick grapes at the perfect time and if the grapes ferment well we can get good wine. We wait a year or two and if we successfully bottle the wine we can age it for another year before release. If the economy is good and if the consumer likes the product then we can begin to get back the money we spent in the first year. I think it might be a good movie. Maybe instead of grapes we might use something everyone knows, perhaps baseball, maybe someone builds a baseball field thinking that if they build it, people will come, and we might call it, I don't know, A Field of Dreams. Oh, wait a minute.....

Fortunately, the new Spring selections are mostly from the 2012 and 2013 vintages which were really excellent harvests with good yields and outstanding wines and the economy does seem to be improving. Both harvests were relatively trouble free and the drought has meant very little disease pressure and despite good size crops, the berries have been quite concentrated. As a consequence, I feel that the standard selection of wines which are all reds this time, are a particularly strong group. Of course if you would prefer to mix in some white or Rose then you can add or substitute from the alternate wines also listed or choose from any previous wines that are still available.

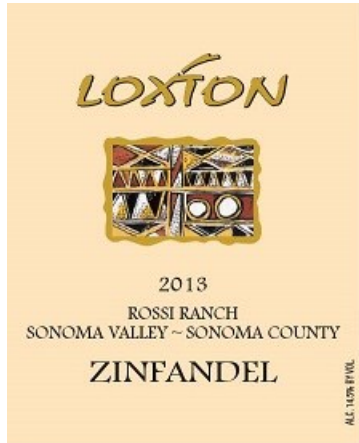
While waiting to begin this year's projects I took the opportunity to catch the harvest in Australia for a few weeks with my father and several photos of the visit are included here. Although my father has been talking about retiring for 10+ years, perhaps this year he might just do it as the improving economy might make it easier to sell the vineyard. It will be a bittersweet moment, but one to really celebrate.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris".

Chris Loxton

## 2013 ZINFANDEL - ROSSI RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Zinfandel

pH: 3.81

Alcohol: 14.5%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 232 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered Sept 2, 2014

Release Price: \$28.00

Rossi Ranch, here in Glen Ellen, was originally planted in 1910. Much of these plantings were with Zinfandel (my 2009 Late Harvest was from these vines) and if it were not a great site for Zinfandel then these vines would have been replanted many years ago. I have great memories of a 1988 Zinfandel made from this vineyard and it was a happy coincidence that when I first moved to Sonoma Valley in 1997 I lived just a few hundred yards from this historic vineyard.

It quickly became a regular part of my walks and loved seeing these gnarly old vines and its owner. New owners took over the property about 10 years ago and have breathed new life back into the Rossi Family vision and areas of the vineyard that had become neglected have been replaced.

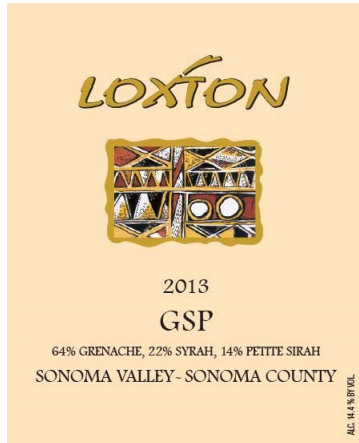
I am delighted to have this wine as my first Zinfandel to carry the Rossi Ranch designation. It has been made in much of the way that all the older wines were traditionally

made using open top fermenters and hand plunging the skins into the fermenting juice. I see no reason to change what has worked so well for all these years! The wine shows the bright fruit that the region is known for and this follows through to the palate with great cherry/raspberry sweet fruit with a balancing tannic structure. A very easy to like style that would be a wonderful match with ribs or for the summer grilling season. Ready to drink now and for the next 3-5 years.



Rossi Ranch is a great walking destination!

## 2013 GSP



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 64% Grenache, 22% Syrah, 14% Petit sirah

pH: 3.69

Alcohol: 14.4%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 149

Bottled unfined and lightly filtered March 17, 2015

Release Price: \$30.00

Grenache is the mainstay of the wines from the Southern Rhone in France but has also found a home in California and Australia. In France it is most often blended with Syrah and Mourvedre, amongst others, and in the New World we have some particularly good “GSM” blends. Grenache is valued for its ability to keep good acidity and not develop raisin flavors in warmer climates and it found a home in my Grandfather’s vineyard where these qualities made it useful in Port production. These qualities also meant that the grapes could get really sweet yet still be excellent to eat; enough so that I still fondly remember the vineyard block where we grew Grenache even though they were pulled out maybe 40 years ago!

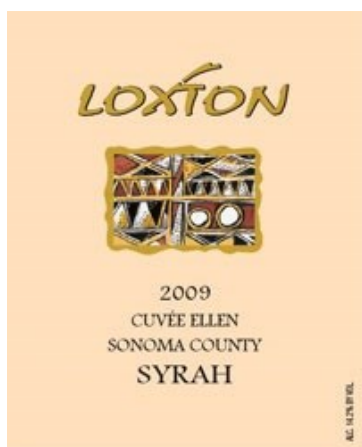
This wine is my first Grenache dominant blend and it has a little twist on the usual composition as I have used Petite sirah instead of Mourvedre. The Grenache gives the cherry fruit flavors and acid, the Syrah gives roundness and middle palate and the Petite sirah adds some color and gives the wine structure. The estate Grenache and Petite sirah were not available until 2014 so this wines uses Grenache from Rossi Ranch and Petite sirah from Kick Ranch. The wines were fermented separately and then blended in Spring, then put back to older barrels so that it shows almost no oak flavors. An elegant wine with good flavor intensity, it shows the structure of those we see in the Rhone and I would expect it to improve for another 5-8 years. Have this wine with mid-weight foods such as pork tenderloin, or chicken and mushroom dishes.



Grafted Grenache vines in the block behind the winery

# 2009 SYRAH - CUVÉE ELLEN

## LIBRARY RELEASE



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 100% Syrah; 60% Archer Vineyard, 26% Parmelee-Hill, 7% Griffin's Lair, 6% Kick Ranch, 1% Rossi Ranch

pH: 3.80

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 281 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, April 22, 2011

Re-Release Price: \$35.00

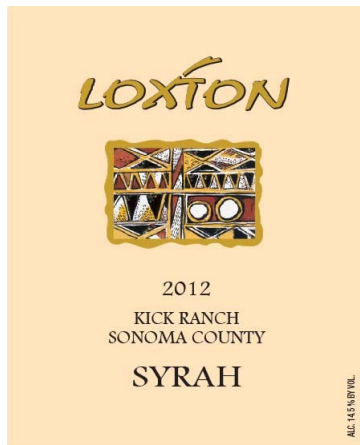
I really enjoy older wines and keep a good cellar so that I can try wines that have developed some secondary characters that are beyond just “fruity” notes. While some wines are not meant to age, some others gain complexity and roundness while still having the fruit and tannin to balance and keep it all interesting. Certainly one of my criteria for a “great” wine is that it continues to be enjoyable and interesting as it gets older. What I have found (after much research!) is that to age gracefully, the wine must be balanced to start with, but must also be aged in conditions that have fairly constant cool temperature and in darkness. Unfortunately, not everyone has these conditions (my wines were stored in wine boxes under the bed for years) so I decided years ago to select a wine to age in my warehouse for later release. This wine, the 2009 Ellen Syrah, is the third of the “library” releases and was originally released 3 years ago.



Reviewing barrels and contemplating the '09 Cuvée Ellen blend

While 100% Syrah, it is a wine blended from 5 vineyards with the majority coming from Archer in Russian River (60%) and Parmelee-Hill in Sonoma Valley (26%). Minor contributions come from Griffin's Lair at the Sonoma Coast (7%), Kick Ranch (6%) and Rossi Ranch (1%). Blending allows me to build more complexity into the wine as each vineyard has a different flavor profile and it also allows me to “design” a style which has elegance and roundness so that it can work in almost any dinner situation. Drinking at its peak now but will hold for another 2-3 years.

## 2012 SYRAH - KICK RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 100% Syrah (Clones 877, 470 and Hermitage)

pH: 3.87

Alcohol: 14.5%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 123 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered March 7, 2014

Release Price: \$30.00

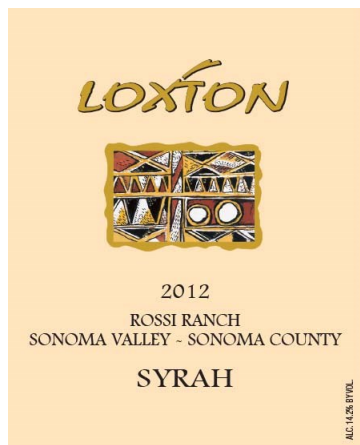
The wineries that use grapes from the Kick Ranch in Santa Rosa generally get together every year with the owner and the vineyard manager and we all bring one of our wines made from that vineyard. It is always a great night; we BBQ lots to eat and the people are all enthusiastic and happy to get those grapes and the food and camaraderie are fantastic. It has been hosted here a few times as I have a great BBQ (hey, I'm Australian!). Although it's a fun event, it is also a learning experience as we share the plans for the next harvest and we compare and discuss how we each make our wines. The wines tend to reflect the individual wineries style, which is usually a reflection of the owner/winemaker, but also have a common flavor thread that is the vineyard or "terroir". For me that character comes across as a cherry fruit note, generally softer tannins and sometimes a "meaty" note that is typical of Syrah. This softer tannin structure makes the wines very easy to like at release but I have found that the wines age very nicely too and my 2008 version is drinking really well at the moment.

To get as much complexity as possible, I get three different areas of the vineyard, each having a different Syrah clone (877, 470 and "hermitage") with each harvested and fermented separately so that I can blend for the best wine in Spring. This 2012 wine has fruit from all three and is very similar to the very successful 2010 and 2011 versions. It can be enjoyed with a wide variety of foods (savory dishes with chicken, pork and lamb, especially with mushrooms or something earthy) and should age well for another 4-6 years.



Kick Ranch dinner at Loxton, 2012

## 2012 SYRAH - ROSSI RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.69

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 232 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered March 7, 2014

Release Price: \$30.00

Although the Rossi Ranch has proven to be a great site for Zinfandel for over 100 years (as discussed with the Zinfandel release) I wonder if in years to come we might see the Rossi Ranch Syrah wines rival what it's Zinfandel has accomplished. Certainly the wines I've made since 2009 make me think so. It's the "Cornas" to my Griffin's Lair "St. Joseph", if you will allow the Rhone Valley comparison. What I mean is that the Rossi Syrah has a more floral-violet note rather than the pepper of cool climate Syrah and has an underlying tannic structure that almost guarantees great cellaring. This means a wine of power even though it still retains elegance, but is probably better suited to meals with more richness.

I think that the concentration and tannic nature of the Rossi wines is related to the climate and soil but can also be seen in the vines themselves. My Syrah from Rossi comes from the red soils and the vines are naturally limited due to soil and water so that we get very small berries, low yields and a smaller vine that seems naturally balanced. These vines stop growth early in the season with just enough leaves to ripen a small crop and then all remaining energy goes into the fruit and not into growing a bigger vine. The small leaves and lesser canopies lead to lots of sun and wind exposure and this leads to great colors (think of us getting a suntan) and intense flavors.

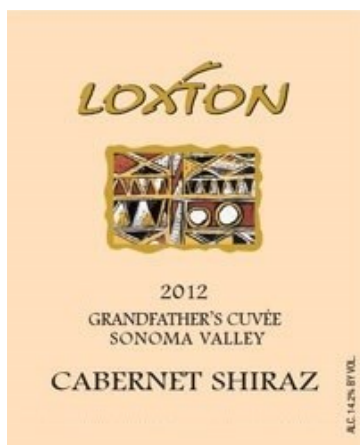
A wine to drink now with heavier meals and can age and improve for 4-8 years in the cellar.



Evaluating the vine growth at Rossi Ranch

# 2012 CABERNET SHIRAZ

## GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 75% Cabernet, 25% Syrah (Shiraz)

pH: 3.79

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Cork finish

Production: 210 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, July 3, 2014

Release Price: \$35.00

Tasting through the line-up of my Cabernet Shiraz blends from the current release back to the first in 2005 quickly shows the wisdom of this iconic Australian blend. The shiraz (Syrah) softens the tannins of the bigger Cabernet and really seems to fill out the middle palate while adding a cherry and meaty note to the classic cassis notes of Cabernet. That tasting also shows how well these wines age, with the 2005 showing really well at the moment and the 2007 was one of the wines chosen for this season's Christmas dinner (it was yummy).

As with most of the series, the 2012 version uses Syrah from here next to the winery and it is 25% of the final blend. The Cabernet sauvignon (75%) comes from the McGraw vineyard on the hillside west of the winery and this was the Cabernet that was in the Fall 2015 shipment. The dry weather of 2012 has given a wine that is in a similar mold to the 2010 or 2008 versions, being bigger and more powerful, with tannins to age for the longer term or to stand up with the more traditional steak dishes. While the Cabernet was a gold medal winner by itself, I think this blend with some Shiraz might even be better as it has more richness and roundness. Drink now or hold for improvement over the next 5-8 years.



2016 Cab harvest at the Loxton Family Vineyard, South Australia, where my inspiration for the Grandfather's Cuvée began



### **2013 CHARDONNAY, HAWK HILL VINEYARD**

**Russian River Valley • 100% Chardonnay • pH: 3.32 • Alc: 14.2% • 204 cases • Screwcap**

**Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, July 2, 2014 • Price:\$28**

Small quantities of the Chardonnay from the Fall 2015 release remain. 2013 was the second year of the drought, an almost perfect vintage with little disease pressure and no weather extremes and the wine shows it. One of my favorite Chardonnays. Only the first pressed juice makes it to the vineyard designate wines and this allows delicacy and flavor without the harshness you get when pressing at high pressures. Bright acidity, real depth of flavor, oak a mere passing note to accompany the citrus and peach flavors. A great wine for seafood or rich dishes.

### **2015 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH**

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah, Estate • pH: 3.28 • Alc: 13.6% • 150 cases • Screwcap**

**Bottled lightly fined and filtered, March 23, 2016 • Release Price:\$18**

The Rosé is always the first fruit to be picked from the Estate vineyard each year and we make an event of that initial pick. The 2015 pick brought out our entire staff as well as the wine club manager's son giving us a crew ranging in age from 2 to 63! This year's rose is a little paler in color and perhaps more delicate than previous versions but with the usual intensity as I have used the same procedures to press the fruit as I do for my high end Chardonnay. As usual this wine is made with 100% Estate Syrah and has no residual sugar. The perfect Summer wine!

### **2013 PINOT NOIR, GRIFFIN'S LAIR**

**Sonoma Coast • 100% Pinot Noir • pH: 3.80 • Alc: 13.9% • 229 cases • Screwcap**

**Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, September 1, 2014 • Price:\$35**

Small quantities of this wine from the Fall release also remain. From Griffin's Lair in the Petaluma Gap region, it has continued to improve in bottle since the Fall. I get 2 Pinot clones; clone 115 for aromatics and delicacy and "Pommard" for color and power. While this makes blending more complicated the effort is worthwhile and this 2013 is one of my best Pinots. Still young, perhaps even better with decanting, but able to show what makes Pinot so special; intensity without heaviness. Drink now or keep for up to another 5 years.

### **SONOMA REDS - LOT 9**

**Sonoma County • 67% Zinfandel, 19% Syrah, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Sirah,  
3% Pinot Noir, 2% Grenache • pH: 3.71 • Alc: 14.2% • 269 cases • Screwcap**

**Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, September 2, 2014 • Price:\$17**

Very small amounts of last years release still remain. The concept for the Sonoma Red is a multi-vintage and multi-varietal blend that is lovely to drink in the middle of the week, works with most foods and does not break the bank. The different components have all been grown and produced to make my top wines, but for various reasons are left unbottled and some of these are used to make the Sonoma Red. Perfect for summer BBQ or a cold evening.

### **2015 LATE HARVEST VIOGNIER, SALOMON VINEYARD**

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Viognier • pH: 3.60 • Alc: 13.0% • Sugar 11.1% • 92 cases • Cork Finish**

**375mL • Bottled lightly fined and filtered, March 17, 2016 • Release Price:\$22**

With the fall heat being above average and with extremely dry conditions I gambled on leaving a few tons of Viognier in the field to make a dessert wine like I did in 2012 and 2013. The gamble paid off when the grapes were able to reach 33% sugar resulting in a wine that is 13% in alcohol and 11% in residual sugar. This version has the some of the floral peachiness of Viognier together with a citrus note and is perfect with fresh fruits or crème brûlée after dinner.

### **2014 LATE HARVEST ZINFANDEL**

**Sonoma County • 100% Zinfandel; Stonetree Vineyard 75% and Estate 25%**

**pH: 3.70 • Alc: 15.2% Sugar 9.0% • 93 cases • Cork Finish • 500mL**

**Bottled unfinned and unfiltered, August 31, 2015 • Release Price:\$28**

Zinfandel is a grape that very quickly turns to raisins and it is quite normal to have some percentage of raisins on otherwise perfect bunches making it an excellent variety for a dessert wine. The heat during the 2014 harvest caused this raisin effect boosting sugar levels making it perfect for Late Harvest Zinfandel. Rich, but not cloying, and with cherry and plum flavors making it an ideal pairing for dark bittersweet chocolate.