

## LIBRARY TASTING 2017

This is the second in a series of library tasting notes from tastings John has done in 2017.

Never had we sat down to taste all of the wines we have produced over a series of consecutive days and in doing so, we learned several things: first, the quality of the wines impressed us (even though we are biased); many of them had aged into beautiful examples of what is possible from noble California terroir. Secondly, vintage played an important role in how the wine was shaped; cold vintages like 2010/2011 allowed deep penetrating acidities to shine, drought years like 2013-2015 produced dense wines with great balanced acidities and unique vintage like 2005, 2006, 2008, 2012 all produced wines that had no equal in the last 12 years. Lastly, we feel like wine can be enjoyed at a variety of stages during its evolution, therefore, a wine that is 1-2 years old can be just as delicious as an older version of itself.

Finally, tasting wine is an objective event and what I taste may not be what you taste so pull a few corks from the wines below and share them with a friend or loved one.

### PORTER-BASS VINEYARD CHARDONNAY / WEST SONOMA COAST

2005      Deepening yellow. Ripe notes of honey, Mirabelle, menthol and yellow peach jump out of the glass. Wonderfully sweet and fine-grained with terrific floral lift to the lemon oil and chamomile blossom flavors. This is bigger and denser version of 2007 but is very pleasurable now. Vibrant, palate staining aftertaste is perked up by an intensifying mineral finish and secondary notes.

First wine, first vintage. Still very much alive and showing well. It's difficult to say to go ahead and drink one now since there are so few bottles left. Has at least 5+ years of life left in it. Looking forward to tracking its evolution.

2006      Pale, green gold. Color is holding up well despite that 2006 was a vintage affected by botrytis more so than other years. Complex, expressive aromas of ginger, elderflower and lychee. Densely packed and firm-edged, delivering considerable mineral tension and a long finish. Building length with notes of wet stone, mineral water and chlorophyll.

This wine continues to surprise us. The wine is almost leaning out as it ages rather than fattening up. Pull a cork on one of these as we feel the wine is in its prime. Drink.

2007      Golden yellow. Showing a bit of age. Vibrant, musky aromas of stone fruits, lemon curd and damp earth. Sappy and highly concentrated, showing terrific salty minerality and tactile mossy stone flavors. Offers up a successful balance of flesh and mineral driven acidity. Saturates the mouth on the very long, persistent finish.

Enjoy now. Wine should reward for another 2-5 years but checking in with this one is highly recommended. Decanting a few hours before service would be advised.

2008      Pale yellow-green. Nose dominated by wet stone and menthol, with primary fruits hiding in the background. Rich and silky in the mouth conveying a hint of sweetness with tannic overtones due to vintage specific frost damage. Shows serious minerality and nerve on the finish with a distinct iodine overtone. Firm acid from flavors of unripe stone fruits deliver a beautifully balanced wine with tons of future potential.

Drinks like it was bottled yesterday. If you had more than one bottle, open one now to enjoy where its at currently otherwise another 5+ (maybe even 10) would continue to allow this wine to sing.

- 2009 Pale yellow. Reserved. Feminine and delicate with shy aromas of white flowers, lime and slate suggesting a wine that holds much in reserve despite the fact that its been in the bottle for a while now. Light on its feet with flavors of lemon, pineapple and subtle spices. A complete wine of uncanny precision with outstanding purity, cut and noble lift.
- Already outstanding in its current state of evolution. Drink one, it's that good. Should age gracefully for another 10+ years. If opened in the near term, decant a few hours before serving.
- 2010 Green yellow. Defined by precision and nervous energy. Pure, crystalline wine with tons of pedigree. White stone fruits, gravenstein apple and jasmine all come together with irrepressible energy. The finish is beautiful, polished and bright. Taut and tense with loads of minerality, citrus notes and structural components making this a classic wine worthy of cellaring. This was the first of two cold vintages in a row.
- Served blind, this wine reminds me of the great white burgundies we have enjoyed in the past. Stunning wine. Drink this while 2011 comes into itself.
- 2011 Very pale yellow. Shy and reserved right now – a wine all about subtlety, nuance and class. Bright saline notes meld into white flowers and mint. The cold vintage highlights the wines structure and complexity but over time in the glass it starts to open up, hinting at what is to come. On the palate flavors of finger lime, green tea and pennyroyal frame a wine with great depth and finesse.
- Best left alone for at least 2 more years. Should show well for the next 10+ years.
- 2012 Pale yellow. Weightless, gracious and utterly impeccable. Layers of vibrant fruit run through the wine, literally pushing energy into the palate. An intensely saline finish laced with white stone fruits, chalk and citrus rounds out this captivating Chardonnay. Long, persistent and chiseled. Very approachable now but expecting it to go into hiding in the next year or so.
- Drink now if you have one. Otherwise, put away and revisit in 3-4 years. Should age gracefully for another 10+ years.
- 2013 Bright green-yellow. The aromatics alone are breathtaking, but then endless waves of fruit aromas from stone fruits, narcissus and water mint draw you in. This is an intellectual wine with hedonistic overtones. Shows great balance and class from the start to finish. The finish is long, deep and persistent with flavors developing and emerging long after the last sip.
- Drink now or wait. It won't disappoint either way.
- 2014 Super pale yellow. Very reserved nose of petrol, graphite, smoke and slate. Vivid and utterly crystalline with impossible to miss textural finesse and exceptional overall harmony. Everything is simply in the right place in this majestic, compelling coastal Chardonnay. The finish is light, lifted and hints at more to come.
- Tasting this now reminds us that wine is living and can give pleasure young and old. Delicious and coy now, in the future we expect more depth and harmony.
- 2015 Pale yellow. Pungent, reduced nose offer terrific citric lift and strong element of crushed stone. The palate conveys uncanny intensity for this early in its evolution. Outstanding precision and lift give life to the lemon peel, floral notes and mineral flavors. Finished with ginger spice and citrus oil backed by loads of energy and great persistence.
- One of the best examples we have produced from this noble site. Reminds us of a combination of 2008 and 2010, subtle power and great energy. Hard to beat.

## **"MARENA" CHARDONNAY / WEST SONOMA COAST**

2013 Pale yellow bronze. More fruit and inviting on the nose than our site specific wines. Dominated by lanolin, beeswax, and crushed stone aromas. Concentrated and pliant but with firm citrus edge of grapefruit, lime married with sweet core of pineapple and guava.

Showing a bit of age at this point but still very fresh. We are liking the secondary characters in the wine. Drink now.

2014 Pure, bright yellow. Aromas of crushed rock, ginger and sweet floral tones. Deep and satisfying, offering considerable early appeal. On the palate perfectly ripe stone fruits and spice flavors complement a long deep finish. Shares more with our site specific wines than the 2013, this is an outstanding village level wine that is enjoyable now or the coming years.

Drink one now. Hold another for the future. Amazing purity at this level.

2015 Bright yellow. Tight nose hints at crushed stone and menthol, plus a whiff of petrol. Tactile, intense and clean; shows strong minerality and acidity that comes from the fractured sandstone. The palate delivers complex flavors of gingerbread, lemon curd and linden blossom.

Young but super appealing right now. Drink now – decant before serving.

## HELLENTHAL "OLD SHOP BLOCK" VINEYARD PINOT NOIR / WEST SONOMA COAST

2012 Saturated bright red. Great delicacy and class to the aromas of tart red berried, minerals, white flowers and spice. Silky and precise with superb inner-mouth floral life. Dry, long, rising finish where suave tannins arrive late. Offers outstanding potential.

Our first vintage with this site. Ageing beautiful. Drink one now. Should continue to age gracefully for another 5-8 years.

2013 Bright, dark red. Pungent iron-like minerality and terrific floral lift to the nose. Wonderfully, juicy, deeply spicy wine with compelling floral delicacy and definition. Distinctive minerality here. Finishes firm tannic, racy and extremely long, with sharp delineation.

Shy and reserved. Holding much in reserve. Wait another year or two on this one. Check in 2019.

2014 Medium red. More medicinal on the nose than the 2013 offering fresh scents of black cherry, licorice and menthol. Plush and thick yet super fresh and light on its feet, offering excellent intensity and considerable charm. Flavors of dark cherry, rhubarb lay over mineral finish. Stem inclusion here adds to wine's suppleness.

More open than the 2013. Still very fresh. Decant the day before for best experience. Keep in cool place.

2015 Bright dark red. Knockout discreet nose combining raspberry, five spice powder, rose and iron shaving rich minerality. Intense in the mouth with its youthful imploded flavors of raspberry and saline minerality conveying outstanding definition and energy. Deep, long and noble building tannins are highlighted by red berry, spice and crushed-stone perfume. Higher pitched than previous vintages.

Enjoyable now. This is also one for the cellar and long haul. Time will tell.

## **TROUT GULCH VINEYARD PINOT NOIR / SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS**

2015      Dark, bright red. Crushed black cherry, raspberry and spice aromas are lifted and exotic. Young, conveying intensity and layered texture with high toned flavors of pomegranate, ruby red grapefruit, cedar and chalk. Broody energy. Finishes with seamless tannins and slowly mounting, explosive length and persistence on back palate.

This is one of the best Pinot Noir's we've made to date. Much is owed to the noble terroir from which it came along with Richard Alfaro's meticulous farming. **YOU WILL WANT SOME OF THIS IN YOUR CELLAR.**