



Bedrock Wine Co. Summer Release

August 2011

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that it has already been almost five years since the first harvest for Bedrock Wine Co.! To say that they have been the five happiest years of my life would be an understatement, and for this I think all of you, both old customers and those new to the list, as it is your patronage that allows me my graced existence.

The Fall Release should offer a little bit for everyone and features wines that I am really excited about. It has a trio of red wines from the 2010 vintage, including the Bedrock Heirloom Wine, and also the 2008 Bedrock Red Wine #2, a Cabernet/Merlot blend from the red and rocky soils of my vineyard that spent 30 months in barrel followed by six months in bottle prior to this release. On top of this, there is the perfumed and spicy 2009 Old Lakeville Syrah.

An update on the 2010 wines. As many of you know, the 2010 harvest was not a winemakers dream — quite the contrary in fact. A very cool spring and summer gave way to two days on August 23rd and 24th where temperatures rocketed to 110+ degrees. The vines, whose defenses were down, were hit hard by the heat. In certain cases, the amount of damage done to the vines' vascular system was such that even clusters deep in the canopy, shaded from the sun, shriveled up and went away. By the end of August it looked like a neutron bomb had gone off at Papera, Lorenzo's, Dolinsek, and Von Weidlich, which meant there was no crop to be had. In Sonoma Valley, those vineyards that were in cooler locales such as Pagani Ranch and Stellwagen got hit harder by the heat than those slightly farther ahead in veraison. If there was an award for "comeback player of the year" this year it would have to be Pagani Ranch — where owner Dino Amantite's brutal selection of less than .25 tons per acre yielded a remarkable wine. The Pagani Ranch Heirloom Wine will be released as part of the Winter Release. Stellwagen, while quite good in the context of the year, was not quite to the level I wanted it to be so will spend a temporary year being the backbone of the excellent Sonoma Valley Old-Vine Zinfandel included in this release. Ironically, for the challenges the year presented I can say with great confidence that the best Zinfandel I have made is the 2010 Monte Rosso Zinfandel, also included in this release. The vines, perched at 1100 feet above Sonoma Valley, were nearly unscathed by the heat and the rich, spicy, wine, brings me incredible joy.



Looking forward to 2011 we are looking forward to welcoming a few new vineyards into the fold. After two years of eager anticipation, and barring another middle-finger from Mother Nature like last year, we should be receiving the first fruit from our block at **Papera Ranch**. Unlike the rest of the vineyard which is virtually 100% Zinfandel, the Bedrock block is only 50% Zinfandel with the remainder being a field-blend of over a dozen other varieties. From just down Olivet Road, Bedrock will also be welcoming our first fruit from **Saitone Ranch**. The extremely low-yielding vines here, planted in 1896, are the oldest in the Piner/Olivet area of Russian River Valley, and starting this year rockstar Ulises Valdez will be farming the vineyard which should take this qualitatively glorious site to a whole new level. In Sonoma Valley, I am thrilled to be receiving all the old-vine Zinfandel and mixed-white plantings (Muscadelle, Semillon, Chasselas, and Palomino, oh my!) from the vines planted in 1905 at **Casa Santinamaria Vineyard**. Also, another potential Heirloom wine could be made from the Syrah and Petite Sirah rich field-blend at the small **Rowe Vineyard** off of Los Alamos Road – just north of Sonoma Valley. In the realm of Syrah there has only been one new addition to the Bedrock family but more on that will come with time...

Enough with the prattling and onto the wines of this release!

Whites:

2010 Compagni Portis Vineyard Heirloom White, Sonoma Valley: In 2009 I took this vineyard not really knowing what to expect. Yes, I had tried the excellent wines made by my friend Will Bucklin, and yes, I was besotted (as I often am by plants from California's viticultural antiquity) with the nearly 60-year-old, dry-farmed, vines of varieties of many different hues and shades: However, I was not expecting to fall in love. For me, the odd combination of field-blended whites yields a wine that offers a glimpse at the white wines of yore in California. Rose, lychee, and spice come from the Gewurtztraminer, while brightness and enough backbone are given by the Trousseau Gris, Riesling, Berger, Green Hungarian, and whatever else is out there. For me it has exactly what I am looking for when it comes to an heirloom wine — it is a sporadic, seemingly random, assemblage of varieties that can only be found together here in California's oldest vineyards and makes a wine more indicative of place than variety, spacing, farming, or anything else. That said, farming is important, and this winter I decided, as many men do when their emotions get in the way of their better senses, to lavish the vineyard with some viticultural bling. Decades of minimal farming (and who can farm when getting \$1200 a ton!) had rendered a vineyard full of blackberries and poison oak, dead vine limbs fraught with eutypa and bot canker, missing vine positions, and limited vigor. This winter vineyard manager Phil Coturri, the Compagni Portis family, and I, started a rejuvenation project. Gone are the blackberries and poison oak stealing the vines water and causing pricks and rashes. A pyre of the fungus ridden vine arms slowly killing the plants was set ablaze. In their stead are a set of new wires, a full conversion to cane pruning to increase the number of spur positions and potential clusters (I love concentrated fruit but .9 tons per acre is simply economically unsustainable), and in the fall the first set of cover crops will be put down to add nutrients back to soil and increase friability and tilth.



What does this mean? It means that Bedrock dropped some serious coin, but that we have taken the first step in making sure the vineyard will be around for another sixty years. I say this as preamble to the raise in price from \$20 to \$24 dollars per bottle for the wine so you will know that I am not simply trying to line my pockets — in reality, selling all six barrels of the wine at this new price will only pay for half of the improvements. Rather, I am hoping you will be willing to join me in preserving this one-of-a-kind vineyard from a bygone age. As for the winemaking, this is a vineyard where I believe simplicity is key. The wine was whole-cluster pressed and then fermented in stainless-steel and neutral oak barrels with native yeasts. The richness of fruit and spice in 2010 prompted me to halt malolactic conversion to retain brightness to leaven the opulence of the fruit. I am unquestionably pleased with the results. Six barrels produced. \$24

Bright yellow. Pungent aromas of grapefruit zest, beeswax, candied ginger and bee pollen. Fresh, light and stony, with taut, dry flavors of citrus pith, pear and candied flowers. There's a waxy quality here that reminds me of Savennieres. Shows impressive energy on the long, chewy finish, which echoes the waxy note. This is a field blend of more than a dozen varieties, many of them virtually extinct, but it's primarily gewurztraminer and trousseau gris. 91 points

Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, May/June 11

Reds:

2010 Bedrock Heirloom Wine, Bedrock Vineyard, Sonoma Valley: The viticultural gods smiled on Bedrock Vineyard in 2010. While the fierce heat did cause damage to some of the younger vines, the 1888 plantings withstood the withering meteorological assault like the champs they are. I sourced the Zinfandel and mixed-blacks from three separate blocks- each coming into the winery in the 24.5 brix range. I picked the Carignane and Mourvedre separately, and for this year, all of the old-vine Syrah -- though picked and vinified separately -- has been added to the final blend. The final wine is roughly 55% Zinfandel, 25% Carignane, 11% Mourvedre, and 9% Syrah and the numerous other "mixed-blacks" found in the vineyard. As usual, the wine is dominated by the orange-oil, spice, and perfume of the vineyard. In the range of power, this wine occupies a middle ground between the elegant 2009 and powerful 2008. Though delicious now I think this wine will drink best a few years down the road. 400 cases made. \$35



2010 Sonoma Valley Old-Vine Zinfandel, Sonoma Valley: Despite the difficulty of the harvest for Zinfandel, I feel that the 2010 version of this wine is actually better than the 2009. Why? Because though Stellwagen and Puccini Vineyard, which were slated to be vineyard designates were quite good (to be honest even my father is wondering why I am not vineyard designating Stellwagen), I am just not 100% pleased with the wines. As a result, I am turning the Sonoma Valley Old-Vine bottling into a “super-cuvée” of sorts. The backbone of the wine comes from the 1890’s planting of Zinfandel at Stellwagen, with nearly equal parts of fruit from the 1930’s plantings at Scatena Vineyard (actually a crazy field blend of Zinfandel and the obscure Aubun and Abouriou) and younger vines from steep and rocky terraces of Los Chamizal Vineyard. Add to this a couple dollops of fruit from Kenwood’s Rossi Ranch and a barrel and a half of wine from the 1905 plantings at Puccini Vineyard along with 13% old-vine Mourvedre from Bedrock Vineyard and you have the blend. The wine saw about 18% new French oak from Rousseau, Ermitage, and Orion. As many of you already know, I prefer Zinfandels that are classically structured — that are not shy on tannin and leavening acidity. Though it was impossible to avoid 15% alcohol given the heat-wave in 2010, the fruit got there from being picked sub-24.5 brix and soaking up, rather than being picked at 29 and watered back (a FAR too common practice these days) which makes a major difference in fruit tone (fresh rather than jammy, bright rather than mute). In short, I hope my Zinfandel’s are close to my father’s from the early and mid-90’s. I love Sonoma Valley Zinfandel for its spice, its age-worthiness, and its lyricism — if Russian River Valley is Miles Davis’s Blue period, Dry Creek his Bebop, Sonoma Valley is his Sketches of Spain. This should provide much drinking pleasure over the next 5-7 years. 650 cases made. \$22

2010 Monte Rosso Vineyard, Sonoma Valley: I have been going to Monte Rosso Vineyard since I was a twelve-year-old kid. It was 1993 when my father started receiving fruit from the storied Martini vineyard and I still remember his excitement and awe. The soils are crimson red, the slopes are steep, and the vines twist upwards from the earth like Medusa’s serpentine follicles. For nine years Ravenswood made one of the best examples of Zinfandel from the vineyard — a testament both to my father’s skill as a winemaker (mountain Zinfandel comes with its own set of challenges), and to the block from which he received fruit. Alas, in 2002, following the sale of Ravenswood to Constellation and the sale of Martini to the Gallo family, Ravenswood stopped receiving fruit from the vineyard. In 2007, when I started Bedrock, one of my first calls was to inquire about fruit. Though the Gallo family generously was able to provide me with the ancient Semillon that makes up the backbone of Cuvée Caritas starting in 2008, it was not until last year that I was told they might have some old-vine Zinfandel available. Now, Monte Rosso is a mammoth vineyard — truly a jaw-dropping Gargantua when you consider it was put in on the rocky side of a mountain in the 1880’s with only dynamite and hand-labor — so I had no idea what fruit I would be receiving. As fine fortune would have it, I was taken to my father’s old block — its beautiful, steep, westerly, aspect and knarled skyward vines looking virtually the same to my 29-year-old eyes as they had 16 years earlier. The 2010 is the best Zinfandel I have ever made. Yes, it is rich and ripe, bearing 15%+ alcohol, but it also carries those things that I love most about Monte Rosso — the mountain spice, the almost claret-like texture, the vibrant red fruits. If you are a tannin maven like me you will like this wine young, but as the many wines I have had from Martini from the 60’s and 70’s show, Monte Rosso Zinfandel has an uncanny knack for aging elegantly for many decades. 300 cases made. \$38



2009 Old Lakeville Syrah, Sonoma Coast: Both the Old Lakeville Syrah and the Griffin's Lair Syrah were bottled back in March and I intended on releasing them together here. It seemed fitting as the vineyards are located nearly across the street from each other — though each has its own mixture of clones and farming. However, while the 2009 Old Lakeville seems to open more and more with each bottle I try -- its blue fruited perfume springing to higher and higher levels -- the Griffin's seems to be doing the opposite. As such, I chose to release the perfumed, more delicate Old Lakeville Syrah, and wait for the brooding and truculent Griffin's (currently a lion-bird with an attitude problem) to reform and make itself tolerable to polite company. As befits the vintage, the 2009 version of the Old Lakeville is the most delicate and perfumed wine from the vineyard to date. Each of the three clones were vinified separately in small, one-ton, fermenters. Approximately half of the clusters of the Noir and 877 were foot-trod in the fermenter, adding roughly 35% whole-cluster for spice and texture. Following manual basket-pressing the wine was barreled down to six French-oak barrels of which two were new from Tonnellerie du Rhone and Meyrieux. The wine finished at 14.2% alcohol and was not racked until bottling. This is elegant Syrah reflecting both its cool Petaluma Gap origins and temperate vintage. Six barrels made. \$30

(vinified with 40% whole clusters): Bright violet. Intense scents of blackberry, cherry-cola and candied violet, with strong mineral and spicecake accents. Shows energetic, peppery, very pure flavors of dark berries and candied flowers. Picks up a wild herb note on the back, finishing sweet and impressively long, with lingering suggestions of tangy minerals and allspice.
92 points

Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, May/June 11

2008 Red Wine #2: One would think that after letting this wine stay in barrel for thirty months that I could have come up with a better name than Red #2 — certainly a failure of imagination on my part. Happily, I think the wine itself is anything but. After a heat-wave at the end of August and beginning of September in 2008 was I concerned about relying too heavily on the Bedrock Cabernet, which seemed to possess some jutting tannins. Since I strongly believe in picking Cabernet at sane sugar levels, and feel that some greenness is part of the varieties natural character, I was not about to hang the fruit to 28 brix to find those “melted” tannins so loved by many Napa counterparts. Rather, I decided to beef up the amount of Merlot and Petit Verdot in the final wine. The 9% Petit Verdot was cofermented with the Cabernet, while the Merlot was vinified on its own. The wine aged in 100% new French oak from Darnajou, Boutes, Bordelaise, and Seguin Moreau for thirty months and was only racked at bottling. Though still possessing plenty of structure I am pleasantly surprised by this wine — it is remarkably close to the old-school claret-style blend I was hoping for. Six barrels made. \$38



(a blend of 59% cabernet sauvignon, 32% merlot and 9% petit verdot): Deep ruby. Intensely perfumed nose offers explosive dark berry and cherry liqueur aromas accented by vanilla, licorice and pipe tobacco. Deep and sweet but focused, with pure boysenberry and cherry flavors framed by supple tannins. Picks up floral pastille and mocha notes and gains energy as it opens in the glass. Finishes sweet and extremely long, with a lingering mocha note. In a fairly opulent style, but in no way heavy. 93 points

Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, May/June 11

My best,
Morgan Twain-Peterson