



ALL RED WINE CLUB

Ballentine Old Vine Zinfandel

Napa Valley 2007 \$15.99

Ballentine Petite Sirah “Fig Tree Vineyard”

Napa Valley 2008 \$15.99

Ballentine Merlot “Pocai Vineyard”

Napa Valley 2005 \$15.99

Betty Pocai was born in Calistoga probably in the 1920s, her father was an Italian immigrant who moved to Calistoga after the great earthquake in San Francisco in 1906 – her husband, Van Ballentine was also born in Napa Valley, the son of an Irish immigrant. They met at a piano recital at the Tucker Farm Center in Calistoga. Betty’s dad purchased a 100 acre vineyard in Calistoga shortly after he moved here, Van’s dad purchased a old abandoned winery and vineyard at the base of Howell Mountain and called it Deer Park, the town that they lived in Ireland. Betty and Van married and had two children. Betty went to school to become an accountant, her husband started working in the vineyards. Van has been involved with over 60 vintages in Napa Valley. The Deer Park label ended in 1959 when John Ballentine retired and the winery was sold, but Van retained the Vineyard and over the years sold Cabernet to Camus, Cabernet Franc to Rombauer, and old vine Zin to Ravenswood, Rosenblum, and Mondavi. In 1992 they decided to start making their own wine and resurrected old John Ballentine’s bond. At first, they custom crushed grapes at another winery then in 1995, they built the Ballentine Vineyards winery behind their old farmhouse on Highway 29, just north of St. Helena. This is where we store all of our Wine Garage finished wine that is still in barrel. The winemaker for Ballentine is Bruce Devlin, who also produces his own label called Three Clicks onsite.

Zin:

The grapes from this wine come from the original Pocai Vineyard that was inherited by Betty from her family and was planted in 1906. The 07 vintage was one of the Vans’ very favorites that came out of this Vineyard. The fruit came from the easternmost side where the rocky nature of the soil combined with the old vines work in tandem to increase the intensity of the fruit. This is a classic Napa Valley Zinfandel, it has concentrated characters and is extremely full-bodied. Blueberry, vanilla, and baking spice rise up from the glass. Creamy mouth feel, with raspberry, rose petals, and red delicious apple strike the palate. Blackberry bramble and silky tannin round out the long finish. Pair this wine with a delicious pork roast or a barbecued leg of lamb.

Merlot:

The Merlot fruit came from the original Pocai Vineyard in Calistoga off of Maple Lane. This is one of the warmest growing regions in all of Napa Valley, and since this 2005 vintage was relatively cool, this Vineyard produced fully developed and ripe fruit.

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Maximum hang time allowed proper maturity. This vintage led to wines having a dark red fruit expressions and were very full bodied. This is a Cabernet lovers Merlot. Initial aromas are of black cherry, raspberries, black tea, and roasted herbs waft from the glass. On the palate, this full-bodied wine produces flavors of crushed black peppercorns, currants, vanilla, caramel, and burnt toast. The finish is long and rich with blueberry and black cherry, fighting with brisk tannins. This wine is best served with an elegant meal of prime rib or a hearty bowl of lentil soup nestled up to a warm fire with your sweetheart.

Petite Sirah:

The fruit from this delicious wine comes from the Fig Tree Vineyard in St. Helena. 2008 was an overall fantastic vintage for red wine. This vintage provided good weather, long hang time, and smaller crops with concentrated color and great tannin development in the grapes. The grapes from this Vineyard always come into the winery in pristine condition, meticulously farmed by Van Ballentine himself. Petite is a very thinned skinned grape and can come in to the crusher particularly beat up if the proper care is not taken. Quickly becoming a signature wine of Ballentine Vineyards, this Petite is scrumptious with its jammy blueberry and boysenberry fruitiness. Extremely black and the glass, in fact, this wine stains the inside of the wineglass dark purple. I get strong black coffee, blueberry pie, dried rose petal, chocolate covered cherries, and black pepper on the palate. This is a very masculine, powerful wine that amazingly, has soft integrated tannins. This is a tooth-stainer, and needs a bold dish to stand up to it, such as a very stinky cheese, or a long simmered Bolognese sauce. Look on the website, normal price is \$35/btl.

Black Kite Cellars Pinot Noir

Anderson Valley 2008 \$24.99

This is a very special offering to our wine club members. Black Kite has been the talk of the Pinot Noir world since their very first release and has quickly been classified as the new “Cult” Pinot Noir to collect. They’ve been getting amazing scores in the wine press since day one including being chosen as one of the top 100 wines from the San Francisco Chronicle. Made by Jeff Gaffner, who also makes Saxon-Brown wines and got his start Château St. Jean Winery in Sonoma County. He was the winemaker who made the famous 1996 “Cinq Cepage” wine that was named “Wine of the Year” by the Wine Spectator. I remember when that issue came out and Safeway supermarket actually had the wine on its shelf for like 25 bucks. It quickly disappeared and they were limiting the wine to only one bottle per person at the winery. This project got its start when Donald and Maureen Green purchased the property in 1995.

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ALL RED WINE CLUB

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Donald was one of the people that created the so-called "Telecom Valley" in Santa Rosa back in the early 1990s. It was a high-tech boom town back then - now it's a ghost town. Black Kite are single vineyard designate Pinot Noirs in Anderson Valley in Mendocino County. The label is named after the Black Shouldered Kite that finds its home in Anderson Valley, and is actually a white bird with splashes of black on its wings. The vineyard is situated close to the ocean and receives very cool breezes and lots of fog but this vineyard sits above the fog layer and gets access to brilliant sunshine. It's the perfect place to grow Pinot Noir which does particularly well and cool climate vineyards. This wine usually cost much more than \$25, unless of course you are a member of the Wine Garage wine club. Made from several different blocks from this amazing vineyard, this Pinot Noir was hand-picked in the very early morning and only the best clusters were used. The grapes were cold soaked for three days, then inoculated with Burgundian yeast strains and fermented in small open top stainless steel tanks, then after 14 days they were transferred to 100% new French oak barrels. The wine was aged in barrel for 11 months. This yummy Pinot is very masculine, full-bodied, and deeply flavored. A rich silky mouth feel on the palate yields baking spice, mocha, tobacco, and toasty oak. Very dark in the glass, the nose provides leather, smoke, and blueberry jam. The finish is very extended with flavors of chocolate covered blackberries and black tea. Serve this wine with boldly flavored roasted lamb or barbecued baby back spareribs.

Dark Horse "The Gun Fighter" Red Blend Dry Creek Valley 2008 \$17.99

The winemaker is none other than the famous Michael Loykasek, who was named in 2007 as the "Winemaker of the Year" by the Sonoma County Harvest Fair when he won the prestigious "Best of Show" award for his 2005 Zinfandel. Michael and I go way back to the early days of the Garage when he used to stop by and we would throw back a glass or two of wine and shoot the breeze. Mike has this cowboy thing going on and I've never seen him not wear cowboy boots or drive a truck. A graduate of UC Davis in 1983, he spent the first five years of his winemaking career down in Paso Robles way, then five years later he moseyed on yonder up to Sonoma County where he was the head winemaker of Meeker Vineyards in Dry Creek Valley. Seven years later after that he moved on over to Armida Winery where he became famous for his "PoiZin" bottlings. It was when he was making wine at Armida he decided to start his own label, Dark Horse. Mike also makes wine for De La Montanya winery and Hauck Cellars. One day when Mike was driving past the store he stopped in when he saw my truck in the lot and while we bullshitted over a glass or two of wine, I convinced him that some of my very favorite wines in the store were these crazy blends we were selling the heck out of. We started pulling corks on several different varietals and started making our own blends at the tasting bar. The result of that fateful Sunday afternoon of wine drinking is his very popular "Gun Fighter" label which is a blend of Zinfandel and Syrah.

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I am proud to be the impetuous of this amazingly delicious wine. As Mike says of his wine: "the Fourth Notch (vintage) is a loaded gun. It hits the mark with big fruit and bold flavors. The 60% Zinfandel brings in blueberry and red fruit flavors along with smoky, black cherry, and plum. The 40% of Syrah jumps in with a rich meaty backbone and adds depth to the finish. A bold wine with finesse. Pair with MEAT." To be more exact, I get a port-like elegance of plum pudding, cherry pie, blackberry jam on the nose, with more cooked black fruit coating the palate, licorice, plums, smoked bacon, and crushed grapes rounding off the long and rich finish. Serve with MEAT.

Kasuari Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2007 \$24.99

I first met Michael Peters when he worked for Barrel Builders, a Cooperage just down the street from our store in Calistoga. I had no idea that Michael was also a winemaker, and in fact he also has extensive experience in the vineyard as well, since he comes from four previous generations of grape farmers. This dude is a self proclaimed "Terroir Junkie", since he only makes single vineyard designated wines with very little human interaction and influences. For instance, he only uses native yeast fermentation and never fines or filters his wines prior to bottling. Thus, he produces wines that have the truest expression of the vineyard. He believes that lab yeasts cover up the natural beauty of the vineyard and that they hide the terroir. He only uses whole berry clusters during fermentation and feels that the whole berries really capture the fruit intensities. Michael learned how to make wine from some of the elite winemakers such as Philippe Melka (Hundred Acre, Bryant Family), Thomas Brown (Schrader Cellars), and Pax Mahle (Pax, Wind Gap). These dudes are perhaps three of the top winemakers on the planet. Only 96 cases of this Pinot were produced, all were hand dipped in wax. Since his brother farms Pinot in Sonoma and sells to the cult Papapietro-Perry Pinot winery, my guess these grapes are from his bro. He wasn't saying. Very French in style, showing elegance and an earthiness usually found in Pinot Noir from Burgundy. From a hillside vineyard of dusty loam with a light gravel coating, this Pinot shows medium bodied fruit in the glass, brick in color. Dusty cherry, raspberry, and moss on the nose, followed by espresso, cocoa, bacon, and rhubarb on the palate. A light and perfectly acidic finish lends to a perfect pairing of smoked ham, or roasted turkey.