



RED & WHITE WINE CLUB



Odd Lot Cabernet Sauvignon

Napa Valley 2004 \$13.99

This wine comes to you compliments of the large 2004 harvest followed by the monster 2005 harvest right behind it. Biggest grape tonnage in history was picked that year. Tank storage was tight right before the harvest in 2005 because there was so much wine from 2004 still being stored. Barrels were scarce too. Almost non-existent in fact. If you can't store your wine then you must sell it and move on to the next crush, so there were some pretty amazing bulk wine deals flying all over the place that year. This wine is the by-product of those variables. An odd lot of bulk wine from several sources was blended by a famous winemaker by a negociant from Lodi who had plenty of storage space. This wine also comes to you with compliments from one of the great wine salesmen in the Napa Valley. His name is Bob. I first met him BEFORE we opened the store. While construction was being completed (by me) on our space I would come home after a grueling day of laying tile, or scraping floors, or painting and I would see these wine catalogues stuck in my fence outside the courtyard – with a card and a note attached...from Bob. He is a sly salesman. He would get a list of the new alcohol licenses that were in queue for approval and would contact these new wine merchants BEFORE their stores were opened so he was first in line to make some pretty big sales as the merchants needed to buy a lot of inventory before opening. Smart, no? We had tasting appointments in my kitchen 2 months before we opened. Wine buyers and sommeliers are notoriously rude folk – especially to wine salesmen. I hadn't known this prior to opening the store since I was never in the wine business before. One time a salesman popped his head in the store, "I'm sorry Brad, did we have an appointment?" I said. "No, I just needed to see a friendly face. I just got beat up pretty bad by that dude down the street". Buyers blow off appointments, make salesmen wait on them for hours, complain that all the wines they tasted were horrible and flawed, curtly tell them they have no time to taste so they tell them to just leave the bottles and they will get to them later, maybe. I never understood this attitude. Perhaps because I was in sales my whole life; I always treated all sales people with respect and dignity. It is HARD to sling your ass on the street all day. So, I started seeing some deals no one else was shown – just because I wasn't rude. I mean, if you are a salesman, who are you going to give the best deals; the jerk who just offended you or the guy who offers you a seat and a glass of wine? I take some of my best reps out to lunch on their birthdays. I once took 5 salespeople to a Giants game, everything on me. We took the ferry from Vallejo and drank 4 bottles of wine on the boat BEFORE we reached the stadium. Then they started buying me margaritas.

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We were pretty hammered, to say the least, before the 3rd inning. We started talking about wine buyers who were A-holes. This one dude's name kept coming up who was the Somm for a local restaurant, and I actually had some contact with him because I was trying to get his opinion on our first release, the 2006 Hillside Cab. I left him a bottle to try and heard nothing back. Called him and left a message....nothing. Month went by and I left him yet another of my \$45, called him to follow up, nothing. I told them my story. "That dude NEVER returns a phone call", everyone said. "Watch this", I said. I took out my cell phone and called him right then and there, of course getting his voicemail. "Hey Scott, Todd Miller from the Wine Garage. Just following up, AGAIN. Yo dude, I'm getting a little pissed. Do you know how much F***ing business I send down to your restaurant in a year? I send so many people to you that I am listed as a concierge in your computer. I would say maybe \$50 grand a year in covers. Look it up. I left 2 bottles for you to try, not really even trying to sell you it for your list, just trying to get your opinion because I respect your palate. You can't even return MY call? Well if you don't F***ing return THIS F***ing call or the gravy train ends THEN, bro. And if your boss, who is my friend by the way, as you know, asks why all my customers don't come down to his restaurant anymore, I will tell him why. F***ing comprende, A hole"? You should have SEEN the looks on their faces! One dude said, "You REALLY didn't just leave that message, did you"? Yep, I did. I was their hero for life, because none of those dudes had the juice to do what I just did. Bob wasn't there that day. Bob is the sales guy who comes in the store every week, checking on his inventory. Bob is the guy who shows me all the best deals. Bob is the guy who UNDERSTANDS my business and customers and doesn't waste my time with plonk or wines out of my price points. Bob brings me lunch and sends me Christmas cards and helps unload boxes that he didn't even sell me. Bob showed me this wine, and what a wine it is. There wasn't much of it but he brought it to me to offer you. Napa Cabernet Sauvignon for \$13.99? THIS GOOD? Ripe plums, cocoa, vanilla, pipe tobacco, cedar, and leather. Silky smooth on the palate, soft tannin on the finish. Yummy wine. The next day after the game, my phone rang and it was Scott. I let it go to voicemail, cringing at my memory of the content of my message to him. "Hi Todd. Maybe you can lighten up on the messages, OK? Bring me 3 cases, I'm putting it on the by-the-glass list tomorrow". Have this wine with a grilled steak, or maybe some crow.....



RED & WHITE WINE CLUB

Puccioni Old Vine Zinfandel

Dry Creek Valley 2007 \$24.99

A classic California viticulture story repeated many times in these notes; Italian immigrants making their way to Sonoma County in the late 1800's, this time its Angelo Puccioni and the year is 1889. He is from Lucca. He crosses over on the vessel "Roma" and winds up at the Italian Swiss Colony, an agricultural commune started by another Italian immigrant Andrea Sbarboro. In 1881 he founded the Italian Swiss Agricultural Colony with the purpose of aiding Italian and Swiss immigrants to settle in their new land. Many of these were vineyardists by trade and a 1500-acre tract was chosen in Sonoma County, suitable for the planting of vines. The land was named Asti after the town of that name in Piedmont, Italy. Each immigrant was provided with room, board, and wages, in return for which a contribution was expected toward building up an equity in the land and eventually becoming an independent farmer. The immigrants objected to the last condition; they were willing to work, but not to take a chance. Sbarboro decided to operate Asti privately. He set the immigrants to work, planting vines with the idea of growing and selling grapes. The price of the latter soon dropped below the cost of production. It was then decided to press the grapes into wine. The first crush was a disaster; owing to carelessness in handling, the wine turned to vinegar. Angelo learned from his time in Asti and bought a tract of land in 1904 in Dry Creek and planted it to Zinfandel. This wine is from those vines planted 106 years ago. Angelo used a mule to plow his rows back then and his descendants continued the tradition until 1968, when the last mule died. The family was the last use a mule for plowing in Sonoma County. Louie Puccioni was as stubborn as his deceased mule it appears, because he strapped the old plow onto the new tractor he bought and plowed the rows like he had with the mule. This is classic Dry Creek Old Vine Zin, with black pepper, blackberries, and a hint of chocolate. Dried violets on the nose, extremely balanced wine with nice minerality on the finish. Have with a great Italian meal of meatballs and linguini.

Lutea Pinot Noir Los Carneros

Napa Valley 2007 \$24.99

This wine is made by the wife of my friend Chris Condos, a winemaker you all know with his many selections chosen for the club. Suzanne Hagins (who just popped out a baby 30 days ago) is a Pinot Noir freak and her own label is "Pinot only". She makes this varietal sourced from Carneros, Russian River, and Anderson Valley and only uses organic grapes - bio-dynamic if possible. Why organic? In 2005, California used 134 million pounds of pesticides, excluding sulfur - the ubiquitous chemical in winemaking. 4.3 million pounds of pesticides were used in Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties alone - for winemaking. Then, add all the synthetic fertilizers and this toxic cocktail seems not very appetizing when it all winds up in our drinking water. All this crap can be deleted if you use sustainable, organic farming. The vineyards respond to organic farming - it's just harder to do.

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This vintage produced only 126 cases, and we took half of them. Amazing Pinot. Very unique. Very fruit forward with a meaty, earthy component that is not found in many California Pinots. The nose reveals mineral, smoke, and blackberry. On the palate, I get Syrah-like qualities such as game, and mushroom, with black cherry, baking spice, and charred cedar. The mouthfeel is rich and silky with a long complex finish. Pork Tenderloin wrapped with Bacon, grilled on the charcoal BBQ - the ticket for this wine.

Charles Creek "Las Patolitas" Chardonnay

Sonoma 2007 \$17.99

Charles Creek Pinot Grigio

California 2007 \$17.99

I have been buying Charles Creek wines for years now. This is the first I could get good enough pricing to put these two delicious whites in the club. Kerry Damskey is the winemaker - super famous in these parts as he consults for some very big cult wine labels. The Chardonnay fruit mostly comes from the infamous San Giacomo Vineyard in Carneros, with about 35% sourced from the Russian River AVA. The 07 harvest was exceptionable, with loose clusters and low yields combined with a long hang time to develop concentrated flavors. This is 100% Chardonnay that was aged in French oak using 15% new wood so we get a subtle hint of vanilla toast that doesn't get in the way of the gorgeous fruit flavors. I detect orchards fruits like crisp green apple, Asian pear, and quince on the palate. Honeysuckle on the nose with some jasmine flower, the all the tree fruits on the front palate with some melon and a slight hint of baking spice on the finish. A rich wine that is well balanced without heavy oak or butter influences. This wine went through 30 malolactic fermentation. The Pinot Grigio is a classic. Pinot Grigio is the same grape as the French Pinot Gris, grown in the Alsace region of France near the border of Germany where Riesling is king. This wine actually has 15% Riesling blended in and you can tell by the slight "diesel" aroma on the nose. Crisp and clean, and lighter on the palate than the Chardonnay. I get pears once again in the mouth but with more zing, like a Bosc pear rather than the tropical Asian pear. Nectarine, white peach, lemongrass, and kaffir lime round out the mid palate with a very crisp and mineral finish. I would serve this wine with a rich crab cake and the Chard with grilled Halibut.

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Odisea Angele White Rhone Blend

Lodi 2008 \$13.99

Adam Webb is the man behind this wine. I'll never forget the first time I met him. I was writing notes at home (as usual) and had him come to the house for his tasting appointment. It was a gorgeous morning in Napa Valley, the fog just coming off the valley floor revealing sunshine and blue skies. I met him at the gate in my pajamas – my normal tasting note writing uniform - at around eleven that morning and directed him to the deck to where we were going to taste his line-up. We sat at the picnic table. I brought out glasses but no dump bucket, “just dump in those bushes over there, they like all my excess wine”. I do not even know what this guy thought of the infamous Todd Miller at that point. I saw his eyes rolling a few times but he is a young, sorta hip looking kinda dude. Who wouldn't want to have their wines tasted by some crazy looking dude who has been up since three in the morning writing tasting notes – dressed in his PJ's – ready to drink wine at 11 am on their deck overlooking the beautiful Napa Valley? So he rolled with my eccentricities, I guess. Anyway, he pulled cork after cork, all Rhone (my fav, as you know) and wine after wine tasted just unbelievable. It was one of those moments that will be etched in my wine buying memory forever. Everything tasted incredible. I was very impressed. I bought everything we could afford. He left a little shell shocked, I feel, but in a good way. I got this wine at an amazing price. Normally \$21, you are paying \$13.99. This is a blend of 35% Marsanne, 35% Roussanne, and 30% Viognier. His appellation is “California” only because most folks don't know where Lodi is. You do, I'm sure. All the grapes are grown organically and whole cluster pressed, using only the clear free-run juice. Only native (wild) yeasts were employed and stainless tank fermented. But he aged the finished wine in neutral oak puncheons to develop richness. The Viognier was fermented separately and the lees were stirred to develop even more richness. No malolactic was induced. This is a complex, layered, and mineral-laced wine. Rich and viscous in the mouth, this wine has aromas of peach compote and jasmine flower. The palate shows white peach, papaya, pineapple, with a hint of Marcona almond. The finish shows honeycomb, mineral, and allspice. Great wine – great value. Have with cheese as an apertif or with Chicken/Veal Saltimbocca for a main course.