



ALL RED FALL WINE CLUB

Third Ave Zinfandel

Mendocino County 2009 \$12.99

This September, Amelia and I headed up to Ukiah in Mendocino County for a buy trip that was partially organized by my buddy Josh Metz, formally from Ceago Winery and more recently, also formally, from Magnanimous Wine Group (Mendocino Farms and Chameleon). Josh is super connected in Mendocino – and it doesn't hurt that his wife Megan is Executive Director of the Mendocino Grape Growing Assoc., as far as getting access to some cool wineries and introductions. This wine is a second label from Mary Elke. I have been carrying Mary Elke's Sparkling in the store for a while and we had set up a luncheon at her winery with Josh and Megan tagging along for the ride. Mary's place is in Anderson Valley just outside the town of Boonville. There are several grape growing regions in Mendocino: Anderson Valley, Yorkville Highlands, Redwood Valley, Potter Valley, and Ukiah where the Tallmadge Bench rises up from the headwaters of the Russian River. Anderson is best suited for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, but before there were grapes growing in the Valley, there were..... apples. It was apples that Mary came to grow in Boonville with her husband and 2 young children in the '70's. He was a lawyer that got burned out from all the lawyer stuff and Mary needed some good country living to raise her family.

They lived in a trailer amongst 25 acres of apple orchard making organic apple juice of all things. A lot different for Mary's lawyer husband that graduated second in his class from Stanford sandwiched between William Rehnquist (1st) and Sandra Day O'Connor (3rd). Mary was one of only 3 organic apple juice producers back then and had herself a thriving business until the California Ag shut her down because they found an "apple maggot moth" in her orchard. They quarantined her orchard. For 2 years she had to pick her apples and throw them away – bury them, in fact – and thus loosing all her wholesale accounts. Later they said they were very sorry, they were mistaken – it really wasn't an apple maggot moth after all since they couldn't live in a climate where it fell below 50 degrees. Mary planted wine grapes where her apple orchards once stood and the rest is history. Things happen for a reason sometimes... You get much better moolah for Champagne then apple juice anyway. She grew Chard and Pinot for Domain Chandon. Mary is quite a story teller and we were all enthralled by her stories hunkered down at a table in her small tasting room munching on fresh figs and prosciutto, cheeses, salume, olives, and delicious bread from a local bakery that was studded with meyer lemon and rosemary.

We had to move the table inside when we were attacked by "meat bees", yellow jackets that love lunch meat as much as I do. Amelia had been stung three separate times over the last 3 weeks – once when her daughter stepped on a nest on the ground and trying to protect her daughter, age 3, but she was stung 34 times.

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The venom builds up in the body and you really run the risk of being in huge trouble if you start swelling up around your face or tongue.

The Mexican pickers call them "Carneros", meat eaters, and usually during harvest they swarm over the ripe grapes that are just picked. This wine was made sort of unintentionally. Mary got a desperate call from one of her growers who had some excess Zin that he needed to sell. He was on hard times and a new baby was coming soon so Mary checked out the fruit and said yes. Named after the street she lives on in Napa in the Coombsville area, this wine turned out better than she expected it to. This is a lush and delicious wine, made in the old school style of not being excessively jammy. Medium to full bodied, it is quite dark in the glass. It has a red fruit character of cranberry, strawberry, and cherry nose with cola chocolate, currant, strawberry flavors on the palate. Smooth with hardly any tannin on the finish. Have with lighter meat dishes like pork, or better yet Southern Fried Chicken.

W H Smith Pinot Noir

Sonoma Coast 2008 \$24.99

These are the dudes who resurrected the famous ghost winery on Howell Mt called La Jota back in the 1970's. Originally part of a Spanish land grant that covered 4,000 acres, La Jota Vineyard was built and operated by Frederick Hess until Prohibition. Turned over to prunes and pigs, the winery and land were in disrepair when Bill Smith purchased La Jota in 1974 from a group of San Francisco investors. Commuting from the Peninsula on weekends, Bill and Joan enlisted the help of family and friends to establish a vineyard, and spent hours irrigating each vine by hand. A growing passion for wine, intermittent success as home winemakers, and the thrill of a challenge inspired Bill and Joan in 1982 to offer their first commercial vintage.

The ultimate compliment—Markham Vineyards purchased the highly successful La Jota Vineyard Co. in 2001. Bill had a passion for Pinot and Helen Turley convinced Bill to plant some vineyard out near her in Cazadero in the Sonoma Coast AVA. This Pinot is a cuvee of 4 different Pinot vineyards from the Sonoma Coast from Cazadero to Petaluma. Six different Pinot clones were blended together and after crushing the fruit it sat fermenting on its skins for 12 days and then racked into 100% French oak for 9 months. The wine is ripe and zesty with aromas of cherry, thyme, and cola. On the palate we see more black cherry, cola, roasted herbs, and strawberry pie. The finish is rich with nice lingering fruit on the palate. Served best with Lamb.

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Susan Fields Pinot Noir

2009 \$19.99

These Susan Fields wines actually come from a customer, if you can believe that – with some coincidences – of course. We got a call from Vickie one day stating that she was in town from Maryland – an old customer – and that she actually had a wine label and wanted to know if WE were interested in buying HER wine for the store. That was a new one, for sure. I said hell yes, come on down and we had a tasting appointment set up for the next day. It turns out that these folks have a unique business in MD, acting as “sales agents” for small out of state wineries under 11k case production that since 2006, could ship direct to MD. They went one step further, they developed their own label, hiring a winemaker, Jim Porter – who I had known since we sold his wine under a label that was now defunct due to his divorce.

He had this unbelievable Pinot we shared in a club some years back – William James, sold by his niece to me who lived in Sacramento. Well the niece kinda had allegiances to the ex-wife and things went south for William James Cellars. But his wine was amazing. So we tasted through the line up and I selected this awesome Pinot for you. The wine I liked best about Jim’s William James label was the Pinot and this tastes even better. Fruit forward and bold, creamy mouth feel with aromas of plums, raspberry, and spice. The flavor of raspberry comes forth along with, cinnamon, currant, strawberry pie, and a hint of red licorice. Extended finish. Perfect with grilled Salmon.

Veedercrest Cabernet Sauvignon

Napa Valley 2005 \$24.99

I love this Cab. Made by the former winemaker from Robert Craig, Chad Alexander, this wine comes to you from an estate started in the early 1970’s and one of their wines was actually entered in the famous Paris Tasting that put California on the world-wide wine map. This is a cuvee garnered from fruit all over the Napa Valley from a great vintage. The color is dark, the aroma is of cedar, leather, and fresh blackberry I discovered a trace of mint and herbal flavors which are the result of fruit from the cooler climate of southern Napa County and higher elevation vineyards provided the well integrated tannins and extracted berry flavors. What a wine. Mint, cherry cola, black olive, dried fig, boysenberry, leather, earth....everything that should be in a first class Napa Cab. Serve with Roast Beef or Rack of Lamb with a fresh mint and herb sauce.

Ukiah Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon

Mendocino County 2007 \$12.99

Mendocino Farms “Redvine” Red Blend

Mendocino County 2006 \$17.99

Both of these wines used to be owned and operated by the Magnanimus Wine Group owned by Owlsley Brown and managed by my host for my Mendo buying trip (and good friend), Josh Metz. Owlsley had moved his operations to the old Fetzer Home Ranch in Ukiah last fall – his family purchased Fetzer in 1992, the Brown Forman Group, most famous for the Jack Daniels Distillery. This compound covers more than 25 acres surrounded by 1000 acres of vines. Owlsley sold Magnanimus to Gary and Anna Breen, as well as the property (not vineyards) at the Home Ranch. They now call it Campovida. The wines are still called Magnanimus, however,

Gary is sitting on some serious inventory and I scored you a hell of a deal with these wines. Look for an upcoming internet sale from these guys that will blow your mind that I put together while I was up there. The Red Vine is a blend of 75% Cabernet, 13% Syrah, and 12% Petite Sirah, all farmed sustainably. A monster wine, dark and brooding in the glass. The nose is characterized as plums, black pepper, mineral, and lavender. The flavors of cedar, blackberry, pencil lead, blueberry, roasted meat and herbs, engulf the palate. Extracted and intense finish with pronounced tannin. Serve with.... MEAT. The Cab is quite a deal at \$13. Deep garnet in the glass, with a nose leather and tobacco coupled with plum and blackberries. More medium bodied than the Red Vine with flavors of earth, cedar, tobacco, leather, and blackberry. Rich and lush. Delicious. Serve with more MEAT