



INTENSE RED WINE CLUB



Boeger Zinfandel “Walker Vineyard”

Eldorado County 2008 \$17.99

Boeger Barbera

Eldorado County 2008 \$16.99

When you think about it, the great California Gold Rush in 1849 was the real start to California's wine industry. Not only did the onslaught of thirsty bodies to the Gold Fields create demand for alcoholic beverages to imbibe in – it was the cultural backgrounds of those miners, the Italians and Portuguese who knew wine and how to grow and make it – coupled with the fortunate climatic and geological environments that led to the wine industry's birth and where it is today. Those old miners brought with them cuttings of Barbera, Zinfandel, and Carignane that they planted in vineyards – some of which still produce wine grapes even today. Miraculously these varieties were perfectly suited to the microclimates of the Sierra Foothills, from Pokerville to Fairplay to Hangtown (now known as Placerville), these grapes thrived.

Boeger Winery sits on an 1850's site that was homesteaded by the Fossati-Lombardo family. These former miners settled down and planted vineyards just outside Hang Town (Placerville). The original house, cellar, and distillery are still used today by the Boegers. Apparently these Italian immigrants also made some Grappa from the grape stems, hence the “distillery”. Over the years they scratched out a living selling wine until prohibition - the winery continued to produce a little sacramental wine for the local church and enough for the personal use of the Fossati family, but most of the vines were yanked out and planted to pear trees. There are a few vines that survived and Greg Boeger grafted them onto newer rootstock, so in essence, some of these wines from Boeger in this club shipment really do originate from the Gold Rush.

Greg and Sue Boeger purchased the ranch in 1972 and started planting vineyards and built a new state-of-the-art winery the following year. The old Fossati-Lombardo house was converted into a tasting room and was opened to the public in 1974. Boeger Winery's winemaker, Greg, spent much of his childhood at his grandfather's winery in Napa – Nicholini Winery, out on Sage Canyon Road on the way to Pope Valley – and he was hooked at an early age. Greg has won hundreds of awards including several Double Golds, Best of Class and Best of Regions. Boeger Merlot was served in the Whitehouse in 1984 during the Reagan administration and Boeger Zinfandel was presented to Queen Elizabeth II as a gift from the state during her visit to California 1982. Today, Greg Boeger focuses most of his attention on the vineyards and grape growing, teaming up with his son, Justin Boeger (the current winemaker), for an unbeatable combination of quality fruit and quality craftsmanship.

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This Zin is from a small hillside vineyard on the estate that was planted in 1975 and has been a special designated offering for many years due to its unique terroir. This wine has an interesting flavor of clove and baking spice after inhaling the aromas of black currant and plums. Cocoa dusted chocolate truffle, black pepper, ginger, mineral, and a hint of mushroom jump out on the palate. Nice acidity and tannin on the finish with cedar and blackberry bramble closing this delicious juice out. The Barbera has a yummy cherry cola nose, with leather, earth, figs, black olive, and white pepper in the mouth. Bright acidity on the finish. Both wines have enough character and acid to cut through a meal of rich lamb stew, Sheppard's pie, or a decent hamburger.

David Girard Vineyards

“Coeur Rouge” Rhone Blend

Eldorado County 2008 \$24.99

You learn something everyday.... I have been doing business with this winery for five or so years now – after since I met Mari Wells at the Rhone Rangers tasting in San Francisco and was taken aback by the quality of the wine (and prices). They specialize in Rhone varieties mostly, and they produce some rather obscure ones at that, like Rolle, Grenache Blanc, and Cunoise. I love wineries that think out of the box and produce something other than Chardonnay and Cabernet. So.... I was looking at the website recently and discovered that they make a \$70 Syrah (wow, the most expensive wine sold from the Sierra Foothills). It is called “Okei San”. Okei San? It is named after a Japanese woman who is buried just down the road from the winery estate. She is the first Japanese national to be buried on American soil. She was one of the colonists of the Wakamatsu Colony Experiment, the only Japanese settlement established by Tokugawa Samurai in 1869 outside Japan. In June of that year 30 Colonists purchased 200 acres of land and moved to the Sierra Foothills to escape a devastating civil war. Their intent was to raise silk worms, tea plants, and mulberries. Unfortunately they ran out of money and the colony disbanded only two years after its start. Okei was just 19 years old and was a babysitter for the colony. Her grave was forgotten for 45 years until someone stumbled upon the gravestone which was inscribed “In memories of OKEI, died 1871, Aged 19 years. (A Japanese Girl)”. Initially it was thought that she was a prostitute from the gold rush days until a reporter from a Japanese newspaper from San Francisco heard about the story and wrote an article about the Colony. Japanese people living in the Bay Area came out to the grave site and placed flowers on it and created a shrine.

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The land was recently donated to the American River Conservancy and a public park and the former grounds of the Colony are soon planned. On the \$70 Syrah bottle is a silk-screened portrait of a huge ancient Keyaki Tree, prized in Japan for its beauty and its wood that often is made into furniture. It was planted back in 1869 by the colonists and still stands today. Cool, yet sad story – especially when you think of what has happened in Japan recently. This Rhone blend of 44% Mourvedre, 28% Grenache, 22% Syrah, and 6% Counoise is a little less expensive than the Okei San Syrah, but almost as damn good. The nose is of lavender, granite, and blackberry. Sage, roasted meat, toast, graphite, and loads and loads of blackberry pie dominate the palate. The finish is gigantic with never ending fruit and a hint of black pepper. Serve with a Kurobuta Pork roast.

Cochon Syrah Contango Vineyard Sonoma Coast 2008 \$22.99

Adam Webb is the man behind this wine. He also has the Odisea label in his stable. 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. Adam likes to ferment his wine in “Hogshead” barrels, thus the name Cochon – “pig”, in French. This is a bio-dynamically farmed vineyard on a steep hillside in a very cool growing region known as the Petaluma Gap. The nose is of lavender and blueberries and extremely blue/black in the glass. Huckleberry jam, blackberry, ginger, green peppercorns, and roasted thyme hit the palate on first sip. Layer and layer of flavor make every mouthful taste different. Nutmeg, blueberry, and lilac lead into the concentrated and extracted finish. Perfect dish with Rack of Lamb encrusted with fresh herbs and garlic.

Elyse Zinfandel “AKA” Napa County 2007 \$24.99

Elyse “Nero Misto” Red Blend Napa County 2007 \$24.99

Wow, never thought that I could get these two wines in the Club for under \$25. Made by the famous Ray Coursen, he moved out to California in 1983 and Ray worked with Mt Eden winery in Saratoga during a harvest, became hooked making wine and soon after moved to Napa to become Innkeepers. Ray started working for a vineyard management firm and then apprenticed under Art Finklestein, making a name for himself at Whitehall Lane Winery. In 1987 Ray and Nancy started Elyse and custom crushed at various wineries. Way back in the early 90's, Joy and I came up to Napa to do some wine tasting and ran into Ray in a bar. He invited us to come back to his home and we tasted his wines in his winery/garage..... how appropriate, no? The Nero Misto (“mixed blacks” in Italian) is a crazy blend of 37% Petite Sirah, 25% Zinfandel, 19% Carignane, 12% Primitivo, and a blend of Charbono, Barbera, and Valdiguie. This was the first wine I tasted after quite a long illness I experienced this winter that seemed to never end. Unbelievably, I contracted Whooping Cough – one of five people in the entire Napa Valley who got it. I coughed so hard that I separated the cartilage in my rib cage - one night I was hurting so bad that I drove myself to the Emergency Room at St. Helena Hospital where I was attended by Dr. Stump, a wine club member. He asked if I had driven myself to the ER and I said yes I did. He asked if someone could pick me up and I said probably. He said: “are YOU SURE someone can get you”, and I asked why. He told me he was going to take of my rib pain. I asked with what? “Dilaudid” (morphine). I STILL hurt even after three shots of the stuff. Nothing like coughing with a broken rib..... After my anti-biotic regimen and the Whooping Cough went away I THEN contracted Pneumonia. OY VEY. What a winter..... Anyway, this bottle of wine sure tasted mighty fine between coughs. With a nose of red fruits – pomegranate, strawberry, and French plum – I also get hints of orange peel. Very interesting. The palate gives off raspberry tart, Bing cherry, raisin, cumin, and coriander. (I swear, I was not on dilaudid). Very complex wine. Long silky finish. Perfect with Italian foods with a Meat Sauce. The Zinfandel comes from 2 vineyards – one in St. Helena, the other in Rutherford – that had to remain secret due to the respective owners that make their own Zin and sell them for way too much money. The nose has an intriguing aroma of brewed coffee, soy sauce, and black pepper. The palate is full of fruit yet also it also has an earthy-mushroomy component. Rich and concentrated, the mid palate offers up plum pudding, boysenberry, and tar. Long smooth finish. Perfect with a grilled Rib Eye steak.