



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

Winemaker Bill Brosseau Works Magic at Testarossa Winery

Veteran winemaker Bill Brosseau must have secretly discovered an ancient tome on wine alchemy because he is able to work magic with a geographically diverse range of California vineyards. Two wines stood out for me: the 2019 Sierra Mar Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir and the 2019 La Rinconada Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir. Over the years, I have tasted many Pinot Noir wines from these two disparate, established vineyards crafted by multiple producers but Bill's 2019 versions are the best that I have ever experienced from these two sources. There are several other 2019 Testarossa Pinot Noirs to recommend as well.

I am not alone in praising Testarossa wines and the winery has consistently received accolades from the nation's most well-known wine critics. The lineup of 2019 vintage Pinot Noir wines included in this issue was the first that I have had the opportunity to review.

Bill is not some johnny-come-lately to winemaking, particularly at Testarossa. He is a second-generation Monterey County winegrower who grew up farming grapes and received his technical training at UC Davis. Bill was recruited by a former mentor, Ed Kurtzman, and joined Testarossa Winery as an enologist in 2000, quickly rose to assistant winemaker and by February 2003 had become Director of Winemaking, a position he continues to hold to this day.



Bill also has his own business, Brosseau Wines, since 2019, sourcing fruit from his family's estate in the Gabilan Mountain Range located in Monterey County's Chalone AVA. He is much in demand as a viticultural and winemaking consultant and oversees vineyard farming at both Eden Estate Wines in Saratoga and Black Ridge Vineyards in Los Gatos.

Testarossa Winery was started by proprietors Rob and Diana Jensen in 1993. It was a true Silicon Valley start-up that began in the Jensen's Silicon Valley garage. The winery name, Testarossa, is derived from the Italian word meaning "red-head, a nickname Rob had while a university student in Italy. The turning point in the winery's history came in 1997 when Rob got a call from Gary Pisoni offering him some Pinot Noir grapes. The rest is history, so to speak.

The winery is located at the historic Novitiate Winery in downtown Los Gatos, functioning as both a working winery and a dramatic setting for visitors. Each year, the Testarossa Winery invests in repairing and improving the old facility.

The focus is on Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from vineyards extending throughout California from the Russian River Valley AVA in the North Coast to the Sta. Rita Hills in the Central Coast. Production is about 30,000 cases annually. Vineyard-designated Pinot Noir wines not reviewed here include Brosseau Vineyard, Doctor's Vineyard, Dos Rubios Vineyard, Fogstone Vineyard, Graham Family Vineyard, Guidotti Vineyard, La Encantada Vineyard, Pisoni Vineyard, Rincon Vineyard, Soberanes Vineyard, and Tondré Grapefield.

The most noteworthy finding on style is that all the Pinot Noir wines have excellent acidity infusing the wines with juiciness and brightness as well as quenching finishes.

Read more about Testarossa Winery and tasting options at www.testarossa.com.

2019 Testarossa Cuvée Los Gatos Monterey Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.64, 2, 285 cases, \$31, screw cap. Released May 2021. Cellared and bottled by Testarossa Winery, Los Gatos, CA. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of cherry and oak spice. A straightforward easy drinking Pinot Noir very adaptable to food in a mid-weight style offering flavors of cherry and strawberry. Silky in texture, with minimal tannins and a modest finish.* **88**

2019 Testarossa Santa Rita Hills Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.31, TA 0.66, 552 cases, \$54. Released April 2021. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 43% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very alluring nose featuring scents of black cherry, black raspberry, baking spices and wine cave. Fresh and juicy with an arrow of acidity complimenting the mid-weight core of cherry, raspberry and exotic spice flavors. Easygoing tannins and quite lengthy on the finish. An impressive expression of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA.* **93**

2019 Testarossa Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.25, TA 0.68, 576 cases, \$74. Released April 2021. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 54% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark cherry and baking spice pick up intensity over time in the glass. A very comforting, velvety mouthfeel creates a favorable initial impression. Mid-weight flavors of cherry and raspberry are accompanied by a thread of citrus in the background. Acid-driven freshness and vibrancy add to the appeal. The finish is persistent and quenching.* **94**



2019 Testarossa La Rinconada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.21, TA 0.71, 575 cases, \$74. Released May 2021. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 57% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Soaring aromas of blackberry fruit, dark rose petal and wine cave. An exceptional wine with mid-weight flavors of black cherry and blueberry-pomegranate accented with welcome spice. Quite forward and giving with impressive purity of Pinot extract and gracious balance. There is a hint of earthiness that I find common in Pinot Noir from this vineyard. Even better when tasted several hours later and the following day from a previously opened bottle. The best La Rinconada Pinot Noir I have ever tasted.* **95**

2019 Testarossa Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.43, TA 0.65, 2,544 cases, \$53. Released May 2021. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 46% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with scents of black cherry, vanilla cola and musk. Middleweight in concentration, with flavors*

of dark cherry, ripe strawberry and raspberry backed by gentle tannins. Easygoing with a modest but satisfying finish. **89**

2019 Testarossa Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.32, TA 0.70, 474 cases, \$74. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 57% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Reserved aroma of dusty cherry leads to a middleweight styled wine with dark cherry and boysenberry fruit flavors that stick to the palate. Elegant in manner with good harmony and noticeable persistence on the pleasing spice-endowed finish.* **93**

2019 Testarossa Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.19, TA 0.75, 600 cases, \$76. Release June 2021. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 57% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely composed perfume with scents of cherry, red grape, red rose petal and peppery herbs. Light to mid-weight in style with a glorious charge of vivid, spicy black cherry fruit. Amazingly long in the mouth and on the generous finish. Very polished with enviable harmony. At this stage, the palate far exceeds the nose in allure.* **93**

2019 Testarossa Sierra Mar Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.74, 192 cases, \$74. Release June 2021. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 65% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. an immensely satisfying wine with aromas of cherry, rose petal, spice and clover. A delicious cherry core attacks and soaks the mid palate and lingers what seems like an eternity on the finish. The deep Bing cherry goodness is accented with flavors of strawberry, red raspberry and cardamom spice. Seamless in texture with impeccable harmony. Even more striking when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. The best Sierra Mar Pinot Noir among many that I have tasted through the years. Flat out great.* **96**

2019 Testarossa Cortada Alta Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.72, TA 0.57, 175 cases, \$74. Released February 2021. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 73% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark cherry, tilled earth and roseate. Mid-weight plus in style, offering earth-kissed flavors of cherry and berry framed by some unresolved tannin. There is a slight guaiacol (smoke) undertone.* **90**

2019 Testarossa Rosemary's Vineyard, Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.40. TA 0.66, 400cases, \$74. Released May 2021. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 63% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Shy but pleasing aromas of black cherry, terra-cotta, underbrush and slight toasty oak. Extremely engaging on the palate with a flourish of sappy dark cherry, black raspberry and blackberry fruit flavors. Clearly a special wine that is appealingly rich yet welcoming with complimentary tannins and a very long finish. This wine hits all the bass notes typical of the Wädenswil 2A clone.* **95**

2019 Testarossa Niclaire California Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.36, TA .67, 619 cases, \$100. Released May 2021. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 62% new. This wine is named after Testarossa founders Rob and Diana's children Nick and Claire. The beautiful appointed bottle represents the finest barrels in the cellar. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Enticing aromas of dusty rose, Bing cherry, black raspberry coulis, vanilla and toasty oak. Long on the palate and finish, offering middleweight flavors of blueberry and blackberry. Very polished with modest tannins and a compliment of oak. This wine taps into all the pleasure centers now but is still somewhat gruff and closed. Better when sampled the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle showing more sweet Pinot fruit and an explosive, very long finish. This wine reminded me of the 2019 Rosemary's Vineyard bottling.* **94**

Besides his winemaking endeavors, Bill Brosseau has his own company, **Brosseau Wine Design**. He is a liquid architect that can install a vineyard as part of a custom wine project. His twenty years of expertise as both a viticulturist and winemaker along with his knowledge of organic winegrowing methods and his track record of crafting award-winning wines guarantees a client's new home vineyard and eventual vintages will be truly exceptional. Bill's services cover the Bay Area and Central Coast. For more information and testimonials, contact Bill at bill@brosseauwines.com, or phone 800-537-9317.

Sojourn Cellars: Consistency is a Defining Feature

Sojourn Cellars, based in Sonoma, is a model of consistency for many years. The winery specializes in Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon from Sonoma and Napa counties. Although the winery owns no vineyards, the winemaking staff helps direct all farming operations in at least sixteen vineyard sources.

The winemaking staff consists of Direct of Winemaking Erich Bradley, who has been at the winery since the beginning, Associate Winemaker Randy Bennett, who also has been part of the winery for years, and Assistant Winemaker Rob Sanford. Erich (left) and Randy (right) are in the photo below.



Pinot Noir winemaking consists of 100% de-stemming, whole berry native fermentations in small open-top fermenters, hand punch-downs, gentle basket pressing, and avoidance of pumps. The wines are bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Most Pinot Noir wines are Dijon clone-driven. Both the 2018 and 2019 vintages had relatively mild seasons allowing for long and slow grape maturation. Yields were slightly lower in 2019 resulting in more concentration in the wines.

Check the website at www.sojourncellars.com for current tasting availability at the tasting salon in the town of Sonoma. The majority of Sojourn Cellars wines are sold through a mailing list with some availability at the winery's website store.

In January 2020, the winery was sold to winemaker Angela Mondavi who is a member of the iconic Napa Valley family and Sonoma Best Hospitality Group. The brand remains intact with co-founders Craig Haserot and Erich Brandley still involved. Winemaking has moved to the former Ravenswood Winery facility (now owned by Angela) at 18701 Gehricke Road in Sonoma. The 2018 and 2019 vintage wines reviewed here were produced and bottled in Santa Rosa.

2018 Sojourn Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.67, TA 0.59, 1,025 cases, \$69. Released spring 2020. Vineyard has extremely rocky and divigorating soil. Clones 115, faux 828 and 667 fermented separately and then blended. 10% whole cluster ferment. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of blue and black berries, grass and old wood. Mid-weight in style and creamy in texture, with an array of ripe dark fruits underlain with a smoky note. Disappointing for Gap's Crown Vineyard bottling as a bit shallow on the mid palate and a very modest finish that displays some alcoholic warmth.* **89**

2019 Sojourn Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.6% alc., pH 3.59, TA 0.57, 850 cases, \$69. Released spring 2021. Vineyard is situated at 800 feet elevation with volcanic soils. Winds from the Petaluma Gap are frequent as are foggy nights. Clones 115 (planted in 2005 and the foundation of the wine), faux 828 (planted in 2002) and 667 (planted in 2004). 10% whole cluster ferment. Aged in 40% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of blueberry-pomegranate, potpourri and mulch. Full-bodied with a bold charge of blue and black fruits. Sleek, with modest tannins and a decent finish. A big boy wine that shows balance at a high ABV.* **92**

2018 Sojourn Sangiacomo Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.80, TA 0.59, 800 cases, \$59. Released January 2020. Vineyard is located on Roberts Road at the base of Sonoma Mountain. Cool ocean breezes and Petaluma Gap fog allow for long hang time. Clones 115 (planted in 1998), 777 (planted in 1999), Swan and Mt. Eden. 100%-de-stemmed, aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Really nice scent of purple grape and berry that is like the smell of opening a jar of Knott's Berry Farm boysenberry jam. Mid-weight plus in style, with an array of purple berry fruits and added spice. Very fresh with minimal tannins and great harmony. The wine snakes across the palate with ease. The alcohol is submerged but don't drink at more than 70 degrees.* **94**



2019 Sojourn Sangiacomo Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.56, 700 cases, \$59. Released spring 2021. Clones 115, Swan and Mt. Eden. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, purple grape, underbrush and oak spice. The succulent deep cherry core satisfies as does the soft mouthfeel. The cherry-themed finish has some length but there is a slight bit of alcoholic hotness that detracts.* **90**

2018 Sojourn Ridgetop Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.56, 400 cases, \$59. Release fall 2020. Vineyard is owned and managed by Thomas Rivers Brown and Fred Schrader. A remote location near Annapolis at 1,000 feet elevation. Goldridge soils with a collection of sandstone and remnants of an ancient seabed. Clones 115, 667 and 777 fermented separately and then blended. 100% de-stemmed, aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose offers pleasing aromas of dark berries, cassis and tilled earth. The essence of purple and black berry fruits is vivid and framed by cardamom spice. Silky in texture with gracious tannins and impressive generosity on the finish.* **93**

2019 Sojourn Ridgetop Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.56, 400 cases, \$69. Tiny clusters and small berry sizes in this vintage led to greater concentration in the finished wine. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose opens over time in the glass to reveal aromas of black cherry and baking spices. Somewhat reserved but still engaging in a mid-weight style with flavors of purple and black berry complimented with toasty oak. Nicely composed with felty tannins and a satisfying purple-fruited finish.* **93**

2018 Sojourn Riddle Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.60, 400 cases, \$59. Released fall 2020. Vines planted at high density in Goldridge soil. Clones 115, faux 828, Pommard and Mt. Eden clones. 100% de-stemmed, aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Very shy aromas of earthy dark fruits and toasty oak. Full-bodied, fruit-driven style featuring flavors of black raspberry, blueberry and pomegranate nicely spiced. Velvety in texture and some length on the mid-palate and*

finish. Ripe, teeth-staining fruit is not usually my cup of tea but this wine does satisfy in its own sturdy way. There is a hint of alcoholic warmth on the finish. 92

2019 Sojourn Riddle Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.55, 400 cases, \$59. Release in August 2021. Pommard and Mt. Eden clones form the base of this wine. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A little coaxing is necessary to release the aromas of cherry, blueberry and clay. A middleweight core of dark cherry and strawberry fruit flavors make an impression. There is a bit of savory spice and earthiness as well. Nicely balanced with a good beam of acidity, a long finish and only a hint of oak. 93*

2018 Sojourn Reuling Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.65, TA 0.59, 425 cases, \$69. Released fall 2020. Vineyard is perched on a small hillside at an elevation of 250 feet just off Highway 116 between Graton and Forestville. Goldridge soils. Clones are Calera and two suitcase selections from Vosne-Romanée. 100% de-stemmed. Three clones fermented separately and then blended prior to bottling. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Inviting aromas of blackest cherry, brioche, baking spice and oak stave. An array of dark red fruit flavors are gathered in a mid-weight plus style showing good energy and gentle tannins. The wine enters with intent but loses focus on exit. 90*

2019 Sojourn Reuling Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.58, 400 cases, \$69. Release in August 2021. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with the scent of dark cherry and white pepper. A mid-weight wine offering vivid flavors of black cherry and black raspberry with a gentle compliment of oak spice. Somewhat reserved with felty tannins and a persistent finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle, the wine was still giving up its charms grudgingly but was pleasant. This wine needs more time in the cellar. 92*

2018 Sojourn Wohler Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.70, TS 0.61, 650 cases, \$54. Release fall 2020. The vineyard, located in Forestville, was replanted in 2006. Goldridge soil. Clones 667, faux 828, 115 and 2A were vinified separately. 100% de-stemmed, aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Corked - boo-hoo.*

2019 Sojourn Wohler Vineyard Sonoma Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.55, 650 cases, \$54. Release in August 2021. Aged in 50% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dusty Bing cherry and baking spice. Black cherry cola flavor is the base for this energetic wine that aims to please. Very modest tannins and some finishing length. Like a white tee shirt, this wine is similarly adaptable to most situations. 91*

Wine Briefs

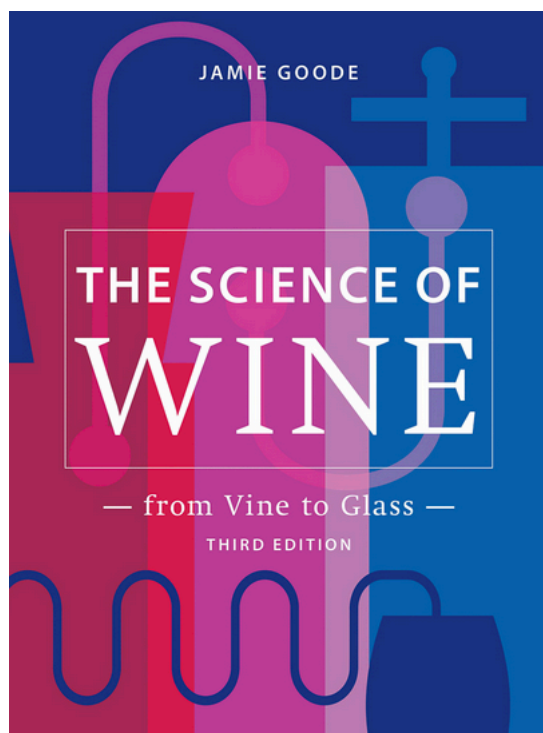
Jim Clendenen Dead at Age 68 Jim, fondly known as “The Mind Behind,” was the founder and winemaker for Au Bon Climat, a Santa Barbara County winery that grew to an annual 50,000 case production from its humble beginnings in 1982. His winery, located on the Bien Nacido property, was best known for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay but Jim toyed with many other varietals. He was famous for the elaborate lunches and dinners that he cooked for visitors, generously offering many Au Bon Climat library wines to accompany the meals. Through the years, he hosted many dinner events for attendees of the World of Pinot Noir. Despite the accolades for Jim’s wines, he never jacked up prices to reflect notoriety. He could be outspoken about California wines, particularly sturdy, higher alcohol ones, preferring instead to craft his wines with reasonable restraint in a classical style. One of my readers spent a week with Jim as an auction prize and has written in detail about his experience. Offering considerable insight into Jim’s day-to-day life, this article will appear in a future issue of the *PinotFile*.



Another reader and friend, Blake Brown, passed on some thoughts to me about his relationship with Jim. “I first met Jim in the early 1980s and a few years later connected at a wine tasting. It was like two long-lost brothers who had just reunited. Yes, wine was the common denominator but it was also about rock and roll, college hoops and all things sports, travel and eventually food., Being a vegetarian, my food knowledge and choices were limited but Jim was a budding gourmet cook and I ate everything he made (in smaller portions). Jim dubbed me a “situational vegetarian.” Both of us had played a significant amount of golf and like everything he did, Jim engaged the sport with full-on passion and conviction. Over a round of golf during a 15 year or so timespan, we shared our lives, the good and the not-so-good, and eventually, our golf game was also about figuring out things in our lives in order to get them right. We shared amazing times together on special occasions, celebrations, and events, but it was the kindred brotherly support that meant the most to me. For about 30 years, we shared a table(s) at the Central Coast Wine Classic and Jim was always the most active and gracious bidder. He was not only into supporting charities, he was into supporting people and often bought auction lots just for that reason. He also created and contributed one-of-a-kind events that always went for top dollar at auction and rewarded the purchasers beyond their expectations. The guy had a heart of gold. Jim was the worldwide ambassador for Santa Barbara County wines. There were incredible pioneers before him and some great vintners during his tenure, but no one brought more attention and awareness to the area. Another amazing attribute was his wit. He was smart as a whip, and when he combined his intellect with his sense of humor, he became a lovable stand-up comedian. Wherever he went, he was in command of the audience and the ambiance was filled with joy and laughter. Jim was very supportive of his children as well as other winemakers. Finally, his choice of dress was unique in that a considerable amount of his wardrobe was one-of-a-kind Hawaiian shirts.”

Latest News from AIM (Alcohol in Moderation) A study in China, the US and the UK found that alcohol consumption is associated with lower disease activity and less incapacity in rheumatoid arthritis patients. A paper published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* concludes that low-to-moderate alcohol consumption is significantly associated with a lower risk of depressive symptoms on a long-term basis compared to never drinking. Another paper found a significant decrease in the risk of cataract surgery for low-to-moderate drinkers, versus non-drinkers. A Danish physician, Erik Skovenborg, has a special interest in the health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption, For many years, he has lectured extensively on alcohol and health. In reviewing alcohol consumption and breast cancer risk, he concludes, “A strategy for future risk communication about alcohol and breast cancer might underline the low risk of light drinking - especially light drinking with a meal - like a glass of wine or beer sipped slowly during the meal as opposed to drinking alcoholic beverages on an empty stomach. Despite a dose-dependent association between alcohol and breast cancer risk, there is some uncertainty on the point of a possible threshold of alcohol consumption above which the increased risk of breast cancer becomes clinically significant.”

Third Edition of *The Science of Wine* Jamie Goode has published the third edition of *The Science of Wine*, an excellent treatise on the basics of viticulture and wine production. I had read the first two editions (the first came out in 2005) and was eager to learn from the newest edition. Some older material was discarded to make room for new material. There are all-new photographs and new chapters on climate, vine immunity, phenolics, extraction and maceration, wine faults, the evolution of élevage, flotation and stabulation, the science of sweet wine, and the future. College-educated readers will find the text easily understandable as Jamie is very good at detailed explanations in relatively plain talk. This is not a boring textbook and I can recommend it to those hoping to broaden their wine science knowledge.



Wine and Fire Celebrates 20 Years of the Sta. Rita Hills The Sta. Rita Hills Wine Alliance is marking the 20th anniversary of the Sta. Rita Hills receiving AVA status with its annual Wine and Fire event. The four days of festivities are August 12-15, 2021. All events will be smaller, outdoor gatherings. Tasting rooms, hotels, and restaurants are open. The event lineup: Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Tasting August 12, The History of Sparkling Wines in the Sta. Rita Hills August 13, Dinner Honoring the Pioneers of the Sta. Rita Hills La Paulee August 13 evening, Time in a Bottle (Tasting older vintages) August 14. The Anniversary Passport will run from August 12 through 15 with 2 for 1 tasting benefits at participating tasting rooms. For more information and to purchase tickets when available, visit www.stritahills.com.

Remember the Good Old Days It seems only yesterday when we could visit a winery and taste wine for free or for a nominal \$10-\$15. The average price for a standard tasting fee is now \$58 in Napa County and

\$30 in Sonoma County. The price for reserve tasting is much higher (averaging \$90 in Napa County and \$50 in Sonoma County). Many wineries have abandoned the walk-in tasting experience and gone to appointment only. Of course in my line of work, I don't pay any tasting fees at all and that is one of the perks about critiquing wine for free.