



# THACHER

WINERY AND VINEYARD

## -FEBRUARY 2019 PREMIERE CLUB-

### **Premiere /prē' myer, prē' mir/noun**

the first performance of a musical or theatrical work,  
the first showing of a movie or wine

These wines are produced with the minimal amounts of effective SO<sub>2</sub>, and are crafted without the use of added enzymes, water, acids, tannins or nutrients.

#### **2016 Syrah, Tierra Alta Vineyard, Santa Barbara, WC \$ 38.40**

100% Syrah, 75 cases produced, bottled August 2018

Having had a long run of success making Syrah from the Coast View Vineyard in Monterey, we decided to expand further into cool climate regions in 2016. This time, we turned south, looking towards Tierra Alta in Santa Barbara.

An intensely meaty and savory nose of charcuterie, smoked bacon and campfire smoke. There's also a ton of tang: hoisin sauce, soy, fig, chutney. The aromatics finally finish with a crazy, mentholated cooling sensation. There's more fruit present on the palate, but it is dark: black plum, black dried cherries. The savoriness continues with teriyaki, and there's plenty of floral components present, along with dried desert herbs and creosote.

25% of the fruit was left whole cluster and vigorously foot-stomped for tannin extraction, while the remaining portion of fruit was destemmed. The fermenters were sealed and left to cold soak for seven days until fermentation began, naturally and spontaneously. After fermentation, the wine was basket-pressed, left to settle overnight, and racked to 225 liter barrels. In the winter of the following year, the wine was racked for blending, and then returned to barrel. The wine was bottled after 22 months of aging. Drink now through 2028.

#### **2017 Valdiguie, Shell Creek Vineyard, Paso Robles Highlands District WC \$ 28**

100%, 118 cases produced, bottled August 2018

Valdiguie was, for a long time, another case of mistaken grape identity. For a hundred years, it was believed to be a weird clone of the Gamay grape of Beaujolais and went by the name "Napa Gamay". A favorite of both winemakers and growers, the grape cropped well, had good tannin and great color, and made delicious and fresh table wines. But, as Cabernet began to dominate the market and command higher prices, many growers ripped out their old Valdiguie vines. Today the grape is almost extinct, but a few small, forward thinking producers are working to revive this old, workhorse, variety. And we're happy to contribute to the resurrection. While kicking the dirt with Daniel Sinton at his family's Shell Creek Vineyard, scoping out the old vine Chenin Blanc planted there, he told us about a small parcel of Valdiguie planted on the ranch. Curiosity got the better of us and, when a pinch of the Valdiguie freed up at harvest time, we of course jumped on it.

Since we'd never made Valdiguie, we asked Butch and Dave of Wilson Foreigner wines in Napa for advice, and we followed their protocol. 30% of the grapes were left whole cluster, with the destemmed portion put on top. The fermenters were sealed and left to cold soak for seven days until fermentation began, naturally and spontaneously. There was very gentle cap management and, at the tail end of fermentation, the fermenters were sealed again for a seven day post-ferment maceration before being basket-pressed. The wine was settled overnight, and then racked to neutral, thick-staved 265 liter American oak barrels, where native bacteria carried out malolactic fermentation. After 11 months the wine was bottled.

The nose is boisterous whole berries and it's all the berries: blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries- you name it. The in-your-face fruit is tempered by quiet but serious herbal notes: bay leaf, spearmint, anise, eucalyptus and tobacco leaf. The palate is reminiscent of berry cheesecake with graham crust and sour cherries. Stem tannin structures the fruit and lends some gravitas to balance the wine's freshness. The freshness of this wine is an asset, drink now or through 2023.

**2017 Cinsault, Glenrose Vineyard, Adelaida District, WC \$ 33.60**  
100% Cinsault– 165 cases produced, bottled August 2018

So, we know that Cinsault has a long history in California. In fact, besides the Jackson Station, there are surviving Cinsault vineyards in California that were originally planted as far back as 1885. They are viable plantings, and wine is still made from them today. It gives us hope that rugged, humble Cinsault, with its drought tolerance and ability to make delicious, distinctive wines, will one day prove to be one of the superior grapes of Paso Robles. Our Assistant Winemaker, Daniel Callan has experience working harvests in South Africa where Cinsault is widely used and we've even decided to embrace this lively varietal and plant Cinsault in our new vineyard on Kiler Canyon Road in the Willow Creek AVA.

For sure, this is a polarizing wine. An obscure variety, clocking in under 12% alcohol, and fermented 100% whole cluster and we absolutely love it. It's a wine about freshness, aromatics and extreme drinkability above all else. It's cheery, light on it's feet, extremely food versatile (although also fantastic on its own), and still delivers amazing flavor and aromatics.

The fruit comes from the epic Glenrose Vineyard and the material planted in that vineyard, as far as we can parse out of grower; Don Rose's memory, is one of the old UC Davis clones; probably Clone 2 or 3. The UC Davis material originates from a mother vine at the old UC Davis Jackson Experimental Station, in Amador County. The Jackson Experimental Station, one of 7 that UC Davis established, was a vineyard originally planted in 1889. The Station was abandoned in the early 1900's, and the University lost proprietorship of the land to Squatters' Rights in 1903. The vineyard sat abandoned and untended for nearly 60 years, until the Station was rediscovered in 1961 by UC Davis researchers. Surprisingly the researchers found, in 1961, 132 different grape cultivars planted and still thriving at The Station. One of these cultivars, Plot E Row 5 Vine 4, was Cinsault, then known by its old Californian aliases, "Black Malvoisie" or "Black Malvasia". Cuttings from this vine were propagated, and ultimately provided the material that Don planted at Glenrose. Now that you are abreast of the history of this varietal onto the tasting notes of our 2017 vintage.

Aromatically, it is a pepper grinder and a handful of hibiscus petals. The palate is more about black pepper than white, and searing bright red fruit: red plums, strawberries with black pepper and sea salt, dried cherries. There is also a touch of sweet cardamom spice. The tannin is light but firm and adds just a touch of wiry attitude to this wine.

For this vintage, the grapes were hand-harvested at just over 20.5 brix. They were brought to the winery by mid-morning, still cold from the night-picking. They were foot-stomped and transferred, whole cluster, to a stainless steel fermenter. No sulphur was used, the tank was sealed and the must was kept at about 58°F until it began fermenting, naturally and spontaneously. After a week to ten days, the fermentation started, so the tank was uncovered and we began working the ferment. We generally worked the cap by hand once a day, if the fermentation was running hot, but preferably every other day. Concerning extraction, it's a lot like coffee. With coffee, you can make a short, hard, and fast extraction; like espresso. You get a lot of flavor this way, but it's innocuous, heavy flavor. However, if you let your coffee steep, as a French Press, you get nuance, higher aroma, subtler flavors, and you can actually see the origin of the material. It's the same with winemaking. Our goal with this wine was to let the juice sit in presence, and to let everything extractable be steeped out, rather than to draw or force it out. For this reason, once the ferment is nearing completion, we seal the tank back up, and allow the juice to sit in presence with the must for another few weeks. We don't work it or extract, we're simply giving anything present in the skins or stems a chance to transfer itself into the wine, if it wants to. After basket pressing, the wine is settled and transferred to neutral 500L puncheons. After a few months, once native bacteria have completed malolactic fermentation, the wine is then racked to concrete tank. The concrete breathes even slower than the puncheons and helps maintain extraordinary freshness in the wine. After 11 months the wine was bottled, unfinned and unfiltered. The freshness of this wine is an asset, drink now or through 2023.

*If you would like to become a 12-bottle club member and receive 30% off, please give us a call to update your membership.*

***Cheers, thank you and enjoy! Sherman & Michelle Thacher***