



OCTOBER 2017

Hello Bootleg Society Members,

We just finished our 21st harvest in Lodi, our 28th crush in our own facility, our 38th vintage of St. Amant wine, and our 44th year farming grapes. And one thing I've learned in all those years is you tend to remember the bad or more difficult vintages than the good ones. The El Nino driven rains of 1982 – I was just a kid, but vividly remember my dad's stress. The broken contracts of 1979 and 1980. The three inches of rain in one day in early October of 2011. These memories stick out like my bad bike crash in college – painful memories that just won't go away. I think it's God's way of reminding us not to do stupid things, at least that was the case with my bike wreck.

I think 2017 is going to be one of those years. A vintage that is going to stick in my memory, and hopefully remind myself of the lessons learned. It began with the epic storms that ravaged California this past winter. Our vineyard flooded, and we had a foot of water running through it for over a month. This was completely out of my control, but left us dealing with the effects. From washed out roadways, to excessive soil moisture, to overly vigorous vines, the effects of last year's rains lingered on for the whole season. In the long run, the rain is good for the vineyards, and we fared better than many with the winter flooding.

The winter rains were followed by a very warm summer, which helped things catch up. But then the heat wave of late August hit. In my memory, we have never seen such hot weather for such an extended period of time. We had eight days of over 100 degrees starting in late August and continuing through Labor Day weekend. This came right as our Old Zins were about ready to pick. We saw sugars jump 4 brix in one week, and 7 brix in 10 days. It was unprecedented. The fruit dehydration, stress-induced breakdown, and excessive sugar accumulation made for quite the challenge. When all was said and done, despite the grapes and vines looking a little ugly, the wines turned out really nice. And ultimately, they will be a direct reflection of not only the vineyard site, but the season. And that is terroir!

I've also come to better appreciate ugly. Ugly fruit and ugly vineyards sometimes make really good wine. It's one of the mysteries of winemaking. Much like many heirloom fruits – they don't always look pretty, but they often taste absolutely delicious.

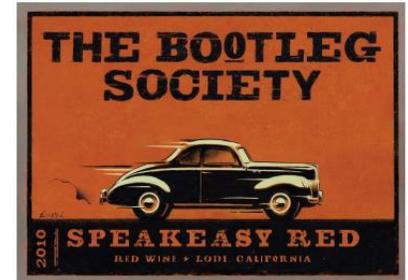
Cheers to 2017, and let's hope 2018 is a bit more "normal".

Stuart Spencer

OCTOBER SELECTIONS

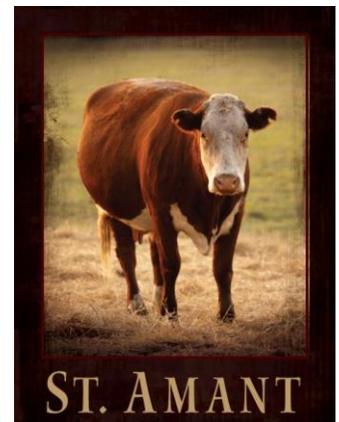
2015 Speakeasy Red - Lodi

I believe this is our 5th vintage of our California classic Zinfandel-based blend. Always a fun wine to make. It allows us to pick the best and most interesting lots across all our wines from a given vintage to make a delicious red blend. And with average of 30-40 different lots each year, that is a lot of options. The wine is always roughly 65% Marian's Vineyard Old Vine Zinfandel, and the other 35% a mixture of our other wines. This year's blend includes a larger percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend. I think it gives the wine a touch more elegance and structure that should reward further cellaring. The wine has spice, pepper, delicious red fruits, and a nice lengthy finish. **\$24/bottle, 299 cases**



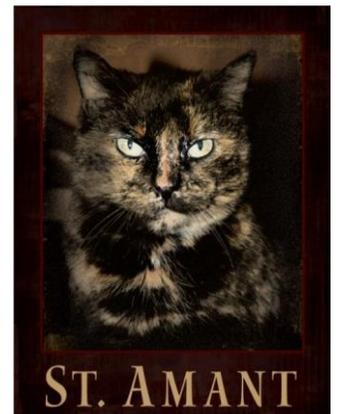
2015 Lloyd Martel Cabernet Sauvignon – Lodi

One of Lodi's oldest Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards farmed by our dear friends Lloyd and Jill Martel. Lloyd is one of Lodi's most meticulous growers. While most farmers hate to drop crop, Lloyd is compulsively committed to growing the best quality grapes. If he sees an extra cluster or shoot that isn't quite right, he cuts it off. And the results are incredible. The wine is classically styled with moderate alcohol (usually 13-14%), good acid and tannins, delicious fruit, and elegant texture. Aged in 50% new French oak, the wine should age gracefully for 10-15 years, but is hard to pass in its youthful freshness. **\$21/bottle, 98 cases**



2015 Souzao - Amador

Souzao is one of our Portuguese varieties grown in our Amador County vineyard, and is traditionally used for our port wines. A few years back we started making a couple tons as a stand-alone table wine. The results have been fantastic. Souzao is prized for its high natural acidity and incredibly dark color. At harvest, it makes Petite Sirah look like a rose. And the fruit is like an uber-concentrated bowl of berries – intense, concentrated, but with a lightness and freshness from the zesty acidity. And with age the wine develops a nice bouquet and complexity as they youthful intensity mellows. And 2015 was a great year across the board, so this wine is tasting really good. **\$21/bottle, 107 cases**



2015 Syrah - Amador

Our Amador County Syrah has quietly made really good wine year after year. Syrah was industry's darling in the 1990's, but never really took off in the marketplace. Despite that fact it can make really good and interesting wine, the consumer never really embraced it. We have persisted. Planted in 1994, the vineyard is 21 years old with this vintage, and has settled down to the point of consistently delivering fresh, spicy, red and dark fruit driven flavors. It just simply tastes good, and has the ability to pair with a wide range of foods. **\$18/bottle, 125 Cases**

