



OCTOBER 2019

Hello Bootleg Society Members,

This past summer I had the opportunity to sit in on a wine seminar at the TexSom conference in Las Colinas, Texas. The session was titled “What is a Flaw” and was led by two esteemed journalists who led us through a tasting of sixteen wines from across the globe. Each of the wines had what most wine professionals would identify as a winemaking flaw. Oxidation, volatile acidity, Brettanomyces and others were all noticeable, but most were still interesting, and some quite enjoyable. One of the wines I did not like – it was a skin-fermented oxidative white from Greece that was excessively bitter for my taste. But many in the room enjoyed it.

One of the journalists noted that winemakers are trained to identify and prevent flaws. It’s their job and will likely not keep it if most of their wines are spoiled. But he also noted that wine competitions comprised exclusively of winemakers tend to reward the most flawless wines – wines that are clean, acceptable, but generally uninteresting.

As a small, independent, family owned winery we survive by making interesting wines that our customers enjoy and continue to buy. But making interesting wines requires balancing the “flaws” with the fruit, flavor, oak, etc. And finding that sweet spot where the flaws don’t dominate, but add the necessary character to provide interest, depth and complexity. Our Tawny Port is the most obvious example – it’s intentionally oxidized, and the volatile acidity is allowed to rise. But it is this process, over years, that adds the character, and makes it a distinguished wine. One of our most highly rated and awarded Zinfandels had high levels of volatile acidity, but it was in balance, and not overtly noticeable. And the critics loved it, and most importantly our customers did too.

One of the biggest challenges in winemaking is knowing when to do nothing. The same can be said about raising kids. They are all constantly evolving, changing, and sometimes dominated by flaws. But often these flaws resolve themselves and form the necessary character to create interesting wines, and resilient kids.

I hope you enjoy this month’s club selections!

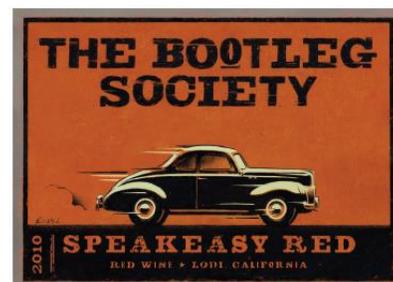
Cheers!
Stuart Spencer

PS – Save the date for our Holiday Open House, December 7-8, 2019. We will open some delicious aged Vintage Ports from our past. Not to be missed!

OCTOBER 2019 SELECTIONS

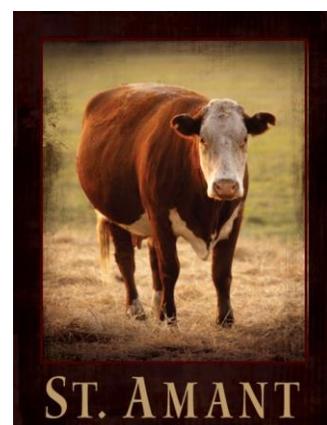
2017 Speakeasy Red - Lodi

I believe this is our 6th vintage of our California classic Zinfandel-based blend. It allows us to combine the most interesting lots across all our wines from a given vintage to make a delicious red blend. And with an average of 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 and a healthy dose of Mohr-Fry Ranch Petite Sirah. 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, 518 cases**



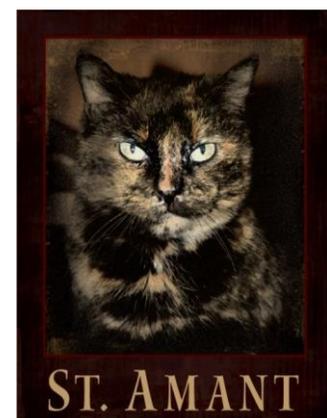
2017 Lloyd Martel Cabernet Sauvignon – Lodi

One of Lodi's oldest Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards farmed by our dear friends Lloyd and Jill Martel. Most growers would consider the vineyard flawed – it's old, has some virus, and yields have decreased to relatively small levels. But it is this "flaw" that helps it make delicious wine. Plus, Lloyd and Jill's attention to detail. The vineyard sits in their backyard, and they are constantly walking the rows, and making the necessary adjustments vine by vine. 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, 93 cases**



2017 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. And the fruit is like an uber-concentrated bowl of berries – intense, concentrated, but with a lightness and freshness from the zesty acidity. With age the wine develops a nice bouquet and complexity as the youthful intensity mellows. This wine has won several gold medals and will sell out quickly. **\$21/bottle, 119 cases**



2017 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 22 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. **\$21/bottle, 94 Cases**

