



## OCTOBER 2020

I recently had a rare Saturday night alone at home. I can probably count on one hand the number of times this has happened in the past twenty years, but I took the opportunity to binge watch Netflix's Chef's Table BBQ series. If you are into food, cooking, and eating well, I highly recommend it. The four-part series highlights four individuals across the globe embracing and moving forward culinary traditions around the loose concept of BBQ. I say loose, because its more about cooking with wood and fire than BBQ as we tend to think of it. Although, Snow's BBQ in Lexington, Texas squarely falls in the BBQ column.

Watching the series, several things resonated and stuck with me, particularly as we go about harvesting and crafting our 2020 wines. At one point, Tootsie the 85-year-old pitmaster at Snow's BBQ explains, "I can't tell you how hot the pits are because I read it in my hands." Instinct and wisdom derived through experience leads to delicious tasting food and reminds me that the most interesting wines go beyond the science that underlies them and falls back on our instincts to guide them. Reading the vineyard, the season, and the unfinished wines is often difficult to define, but key to consistently making compelling wines. And working with the same vineyards, year after year, decade after decade, gives us the wisdom to guide those wines.

I was also fascinated with the story of Lennox Hastie and his Firedoor restaurant in Australia. Trained in the finest French culinary traditions and having worked in top restaurants in the UK and France, Hastie was looking for more. He found himself working at Extebarri, in Spain's Basque region, a small critically acclaimed restaurant that cooks everything over fire. This experience led him to establish his own restaurant in Australia where everything from salad to dessert is cooked with wood burning fires. No gas, no electricity, just wood and fire. Hastie described becoming disillusioned with the multi-step processes and countless ingredients that go into fine French culinary cuisine, and instead being inspired by the simplicity of great ingredients and wood-burning fires. Which once again reminded me of the wines I find the most compelling. Great grapes, who's vines have found a natural balance with their environment, and simple straight forward processes that do not obscure the wine.

Too often in winemaking the processes dominate, and your left with clean and correct, but relatively uninteresting wines. We are trying to do something different. Something simple. No secrets. Just good wine. And like most serious endeavors in life, it is a journey, and we once again thank you for joining us on this adventure.

I hope you enjoy this month's selections.

Cheers!  
Stuart Spencer



### **2018 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 is 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 (13.4%) 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, 103 cases**

### **2018 Souzao - Amador**

Souzao is a Portuguese variety grown in our Amador County vineyard that 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 a 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.

**\$21/bottle, 135 cases**

### **2018 Syrah - Amador**

Our Amador County Syrah has quietly made really good wine year after year. Syrah was the 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 24 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, 149 Cases**

### **2018 Speakeasy Red - Lodi**

Speakeasy Red is our version of a California classic Zinfandel-based field blend. Marian's Vineyard Zinfandel forms the core of the blend at approximately 65% and then a mixture of Petite Sirah, Barbera, Alicante Bouschet, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Tempranillo round out the wine. The varieties work in harmony to make a delicious red blend with spice, pepper, red berry fruits and a lengthy well-structured finish. Delicious now, but will reward further cellaring.

**\$24/bottle, 367 cases**