



Change Is In the Air

A Message From the Board

There are a couple of important things to announce this month, both stemming from the Annual November Business Meeting.

The first was a vote on whether to increase the annual dues. The dues have stayed at \$50 for more than 20 years. Our two biggest expenses, renting Ponderosa Hall for our meetings and our insurance policy have increased substantially over the last several years.

The Board debated whether we should propose raising the dues enough to cover future potential operating costs or to limit the increase to strictly cover next year's foreseeable operating expenses. The Board decided to go with the least amount of increase possible. The proposal was to raise the dues from \$50 to \$65. At the general meeting it passed unanimously.

Please pay your dues as soon as you can. We need the money.

The second item of business was to elect a new Board of Directors. We are delighted to retain five current Board members while introducing three new members. The new members include Lisa Whittet, Tom Martella and Gerard van Steyn. Welcome in. And a special thanks to retiring members Bob Hudelson and Louis Quaintance.

Also a huge shout out to Geri Frescas who took the reins of our Holiday Party and did a great job. Thank-you Geri.

2024 Board of Directors

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|---------------------|------------------|
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Even More Changes

New In 2024

You may recall hearing that SWGGA will not hold its own Wine Competition in 2024. A very big part of doing the competition was to provide unbiased and hopefully reasonably accurate assessments of your wines. Honest feedback.

We are still committed to doing that. But this year we are going to try in a different way.

Here is the part that matters to everyone, whether you make wine or not. Our meetings will have a new format. Starting in January 2024.

Social Hour will begin at 6:30, just like it does right now. Promptly at 7:00 we will sit down for 15 minutes, with two of your wines, and only two wines, for wine evaluation. Then, at 7:15 we will start the meeting and regular program, just like we do right now.

It represents a very minor and yet a still quite major change. We're hoping you will be up for trying this. You can see more details on page 2.

Meeting Format Changes Continued From Page 1

If you read page 1, New In 2024, then you already know we are only talking about a 15 minute change. The Social Hour still starts at 6:30. Remember, that is the best chance we get right now to taste each others wines. The actual meeting will still start at 7:15, with any introductions, announcements, and the program.

What happens in that newly carved out 15 minutes? We are going to taste two different, pre-determined member wines. Whatever they turn out to be. Everyone gets two scoresheets. One for each wine. You will know the varietal and the vintage. That is all.

We take a maximum of 15 minutes. We all taste the first wine, everyone writes something. Ugh. Yum. Something. Then we will talk about the wine. Then go to the second wine. At the end we collect all the scoresheets, no need to put your name on it, but you can, and then the scoresheets later go to each of the two winemakers. At no point does anyone know whose wine it actually is. A blind tasting.

You can see how this might be beneficial on both ends. As wine tasters this becomes a free space to practice. As winemakers, not only do you get the actual dialogue in the room, you get the tasting notes.

What we need is for you all to participate. The tasting part won't be a big issue. It's getting the two wines for each meeting. That is the sticky part. First of all, it will take two bottles of wine. It takes about a bottle and a half to get around the room. We have eight meetings at Ponderosa Hall, so 16 different wines.

Of course we want to create a safe forum for new winemakers to have their wines evaluated. But it is equally interesting for someone who is doing a small batch experiment and wants to hear the feedback. What about a veteran winemaker with a six or seven year old wine in the cellar? How is it holding up?

January Wine 1:

January Wine 2:

February Wine 1:

February Wine 2:

March Wine 1:

March Wine 2:

April Wine 1:

April Wine 2:

July Wine 1:

July Wine 2:

August Wine 1:

August Wine 2:

October Wine 1:

October Wine 2:

November Wine 1:

November Wine 2:

Here's The Dance Card

I would really like to be able to fill in this entire sheet, for the year. Do you have a wine you want tasted at one of our meetings? Will you take a slot?

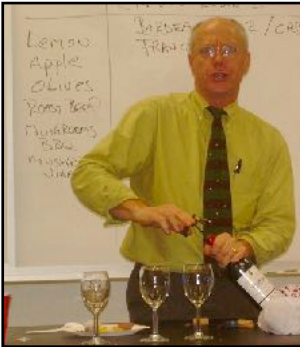
If it is a young wine, maybe you are wondering what to do next? If it is an experiment you might want feedback. Or maybe you are wondering if you should bottle it now, or or maybe give it more oak, or maybe blend it with something, or bump the acid? Or maybe it's simply your latest new release or perhaps an older Library wine. Please consider taking a slot. Let's see if we can do this. Let's all learn.

Send your requests, comments, or questions directly to me at: rodbyers@pinehillwineworks.com

January Meeting

Thursday, January 18th, 6:30 p.m. Ponderosa Hall

Remember, Social Hour at 6:30. Wine Evaluation at 7:00. Meeting starts at 7:15. Hello and howdy.



Becoming A Better Taster, Part Two

A few of you may recall we started out last year with a very basic component tasting looking at different flavor profiles in wine. I am not going to repeat that one but I would like to do a different one. Another component tasting.

A component tasting is when you highlight a specific flavor component: sweetness, acidity, oak, bitterness, tannin. By shining a spotlight on a single element it can help to identify that same element in other wines. Lets goof around and play a little wine game. I'll bring the scoresheets and wine. You bring glasses.



In Case You Missed It

Because November's meeting was the second and not the usual third Thursday of the month, our crack team of reporters, Grace and Bernie, could not be in attendance. We will look forward to the return of their photos and report next time.

In the meantime, let me tell you, it was pretty cool. Dave Elliott used seven different types of oak cubes to essentially create seven different wines, even though they were all the same wine. It was not just a question of how much oak, but also, which kind of oak.

Thanks Dave. That was very cool.

The Return Of The Wine Exchange, Right After the January Meeting

Peter Willcox has successfully run The Wine Exchange for several years. It is very simple. Bring as many bottles of your wine as you like, leave with the equivalent amount of bottles of other wines. An exchange.

It is not part of the regular meeting. It will take place, under Peter's supervision, at the end of the January meeting.

Peter says "Here is your opportunity to take home some SWGGA wine as we're scheduling the annual wine exchange for our January meeting. Bring a bottle, or a case, or in-between, of your good wine and go home with an equal amount of other member's good wines. It's a bottle for bottle exchange."



"This year I'm asking for those bringing a case, to select two or three different varieties so that we have plenty to choose from. Variety is the watchword." Questions? Contact Peter at willcoxps@yahoo.com.

"My haul from The Wine Exchange from a couple of years ago," Peter

Twice Is Nice *The Second Time Around*

I met up Lisa and Mike Whittet and then Tom Martella last year when they were picking Zinfandel grapes from Curtis Peterson's Rocky Ridge Vineyard. Both were making wine for the first time. I thought it might be interesting to double back to visit with Lisa and Tom again after they both had completed their second year.



Lisa Whittet. “Last year we had just joined SWGGA, heard about the Zin Group Buy with Curtis and thought, why not? We decided to go in for 100 pounds.

We attended Guy Lauterbach's three-session course in winemaking. It was incredibly informative although to be honest, most of it went right over my head.

We fermented the Zinfandel, added ML after fermentation was complete, racked to glass carboys and added some oak cubes. We bottled the wine in the summer. We forgot to add any SO₂ at bottling so not sure how that is going to turn out. John at Sierra Moonshine told us to maybe drink it sooner than later.

This year we picked 125 pounds of Cabernet from Curtis Peterson and 150 pounds of Tempranillo from Ray and Geri Frescas. We took Guy's class again. It made more sense this time. We essentially did the same things as last year except we added the ML sooner, during the primary ferment, but that was mostly because we were going out of town. Plus we tried different yeasts.

It is helpful that Mike knows chemistry. He purchased a pH meter, a way to test for SO₂, and the requirements to do ML chromatography tests. He does all that. Still not sure what we're doing, but we feel a little more confident doing it. We'll see how the wine turns out.”

Tom Martella started his grape winemaking career last year when he went in on 200 pounds of Zinfandel with the group Zin buy. He crushed them at the vineyard and brought them home as must.

He relied heavily on advice from Jim Garrett, Guy Lauterbach and John Lyon from Sierra Moonshine, and his son Erik who is in the wine business as well.

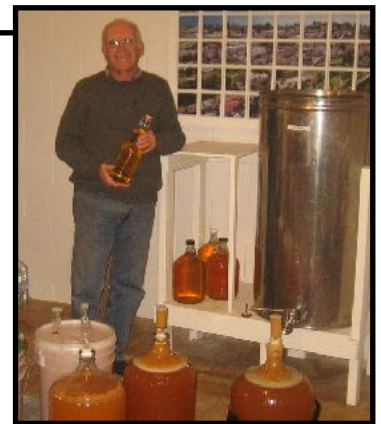
Tom followed pretty traditional techniques, crush, ferment, press, add ML after the primary ferment. During aging he used medium-plus French oak cubes. He bottled the wine in May with advice from Erik who suggested it was better to bottle age the wine rather than age it in tank and then bottle it.

Tom thinks the wine has continued to improve since bottling but recognizes that by bottling early he gave up his chance of any final adjustments he might have made following a more traditional bottling timeline.

This year he picked 350 pounds of Cabernet Sauvignon, again from Curtis Peterson's Rocky Ridge Vineyard. But this year he added a few new wrinkles to his fermentation process starting with a two-day cold soak before adding the yeast. He covered the must with a blanket but did not add any SO₂. He figured allowing the grapes to soak would extract more flavor from the fruit.

Another change was to add the ML bacteria sooner doing a co-ferment during the primary grape fermentation. Then after the primary ferment was over, he did another extended five-day soak. It was only after that that he pressed the grapes and added SO₂ for protection.

Never having done it before Tom is not sure how it will all turn out but he likes the concepts at the heart of his new techniques. “Hopefully I am making all my mistakes in the first couple of years,” he joked. No matter what, he feels like he is honing his techniques and style and feels a lot more confident this year. Next year he expects to make wine from his own grapes.



Meet The Members New Member Profile



Adriaan Boer

Not sure if Adriaan counts as an old new member or a new old member. Either way he used to be a member and now he is again.

Adriaan and Joanna Boer moved to Nevada County in 1977. A recent graduate from dental school, he opened a private practice on South Auburn Street in Grass Valley.

They enjoyed going wine tasting and became friends with John McCready the owner/winemaker at Sierra Vista Winery in El Dorado County. In 1987 Adriaan collect 40 Cabernet Sauvignon vine cuttings from McCready's estate vineyard. He went home and planted them. Over the next couple of years he kept bringing home more Cab cuttings getting up to 165 vines in total.

He didn't know anything about viniculture so he joined both a local home winemaking group as well as the Sierra Grape Growers Association. At that time SWGA focused exclusively on vineyard development and grape growing. Current long-time SWGGA members might recall some of Adriaan's old pals from the day, Jerry Galuhn, Richard Sywalka and Gordon Mullay, who were all members of the organization at the time.

"That is where I learned how to grow grapes," he chuckled. "The trick to making good wine is to start by growing good grapes." His first vintage was 1990 and over the decade he perfected his style. He describes himself as pretty traditional in his techniques. Crush, ferment, add ML, press, rack into a barrel. He likes to leave it in barrel for three years before bottling. These days he makes a Cabernet rosé as well.

His wine buddies started to drop away a little bit, he was feeling pretty solid about what he was doing, and just kinda dropped away from the organization. Around 2000 he stopped being an active member although he never stopped growing grapes and making wine.

Anybody who has made wine for an extended number of years (Adriaan has been doing it for 30) knows how easy it is to make more wine than you consume. It piles up sometimes.

"Now I only pick the very best clusters. Leave everything else for the birds. It's too much work to net the vineyard and I don't want that many grapes."

Why rejoin SWGGA? "My friend (and also new SWGGA member) Josh Veblen wants to plant a vineyard. I thought he should join SWGGA and then I thought, we should join together. So we did."

It's a great story. We're glad you rejoined. Looking forward to tasting a few of your Cabs.



Officers and Directors

President

Diane Houston
diane.houston

@managementtrust.com

Vice- President

Dave Elliott
djelliott

@skydancesranch.com

Treasurer

Bob Hudelson
bob

@hudelsonranch.com

Secretary

Susan Clarabut
sclarabut@gmail.com

Social

Coordinator
Al Schafer

afsarch@sbcglobal.net

Program Coordinator

Rod Byers
rodbyers

@pinehillwineworks.com

Director At-Large

Louis Quaintance
bodyart@lmi.net

Web Master

Jim Garrett

jim@relateddata.com

Trellis Wire Editor

Rod Byers
rodbyers

@pinehillwineworks.com

Check the website, www.swgga.org for product descriptions. Contact Susan Clarabut at sclarabut@gmail.com if you have questions, wish to check pricing, or, best of all, would like to make an order.

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