

Member Newsletter

November 2013

Fall is in the air! The weather in Napa Valley is absolutely spectacular, with crystal clear air and the leaves gently swirling as they fall from our backyard oak trees. The vineyards are turning to gentle orange and red hues as the vines become dormant for their winter rest.

O'Brien Fall Update

As we mentioned in our last club newsletter, we went on an epic family vacation to China and Japan. Our son Mason worked for an Australian company in Shanghai as a summer intern, so this prompted a family vacation to Asia with our daughter Emily and Mason after he finished his internship. We visited Shanghai, Beijing, Tokyo, and Kyoto for 4 days each. Amazing places, particularly the Great Wall and the Forbidden City in Beijing. We had a great time exploring the “small bar” districts of Tokyo and Kyoto where narrow alleys are lined with cubbyhole bars that hold only 4-6 people at a time. Each bar is themed with a different style of music – some are devoted to classic jazz while others feature punk rock. A very unique and very Japanese experience!

Our vineyards performed spectacularly in 2013 – another great year for Napa Valley and O'Brien Estate. David Yorgensen, our winemaker, is very happy with the harvest this year, which rivals 2012 in terms for quality. The grapes have been crushed, and will have finished primary fermentation by the time you read this letter. Carefully resting in new French oak barrels, while gaining flavor and complexity from the wood, the wine is starting the aging process with the transpiring of minute amounts of oxygen through the sides of the oak barrels.

So harvest is over and winter is upon us, and with winter, the holiday season - a time to visit with old friends and to meet new ones. We moved up our Winter club shipment date this year so you could receive O'Brien wine in time for the holidays to share with family and friends. We hope you have a special holiday season you remember for years.

A Night of Unrestrained Reserve - Shanghai Nights

Our trip to Asia inspired Barb to add an Asian theme to our annual “A Night of Unrestrained Reserve” by calling it “Shanghai Nights”. She decorated the tasting room with hand-tied silk good luck tassels brought back from Shanghai as napkin rings and party favors. Our “Top Chef” finalist friend and private chef Lizzie Binder cooked an amazing meal for our 36 guests that evening. Dancing followed dinner. We have learned that parties with dancing are definitely fun so we are featuring dancing at Date Night at the Drive-In and Night of Unrestrained Reserve.

Ireland Wine Club Member Trip

We will be leading an expedition of wine club members to Ireland April 2014 to celebrate the 1,000 year anniversary of the death of Brian Boru, the first High King of Ireland, on the battlefield at Clontarf (outside Dublin) during the defeat of the Danish Vikings. O’Brien means “son of Brian” so all O’Brien’s are (in theory at least) direct descendants of Brian Boru, so this is a great excuse for a serious celebration in Ireland. We have arranged for a group tour, starting in western Ireland, to retrace the footsteps of Brian Boru across Ireland and to end up in Dublin to celebrate with other members of the O’Brien Clan (of which Bart is on the Board of Directors). We hope you can join us in this memorable experience! Join our tour by contacting Ronan Gleeson at Irish Tourism below:

ronan@irishtourism.com

www.irishtourism.com

US TollFree 1877 298 7205

This trip is almost sold out so sign up soon if you want to join us!

Upcoming Events

Our wine club member event calendar for 2014 is below. If you happen to be in Napa Valley during one of our Wine Club Pickup Parties – held for our local members who come by the winery to pick up their club orders - please come by and join the fun. We will be having our Valentine’s Evening dinner in Houston Feb 11 and 12. We will email all of our Texas wine club members as soon as the locations and dates are firm.

February 23	Wine Club Pickup Party
March 17	St. Patrick’s Day Celebration
May 18	Wine Club Pickup Party
July 19	Date Night at the Drive-In
September 7	Wine Club Pickup Party
September 27	Night of Unrestrained Reserve
November 16	Wine Club Pickup Party

Recipe

We asked Lizzie to share her recipe from one of her delicious dishes she prepared for our Shanghai Nights dinner. Here it is:

Shanghai Nights Pork Dumplings

Makes 60 dumplings

Ingredients:

Dough:

3 cups all-purpose flour
up to 1 1/4 cups cold water
1/4 tsp salt
(or use wonton wrappers)

Filling:

1 cup ground pork or beef
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp Chinese rice wine
1/4 tsp freshly ground white pepper, or to taste
3 tbsp sesame oil
1/2 green onion, finely minced
1 1/2 cups finely shredded Napa cabbage
2 slices fresh ginger, finely minced
1 clove garlic, peeled and finely minced

Dipping Sauce:

1/2 cup chinese black vinegar
2 tbsp peanut oil
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1 red chili, deseeded and finely chopped
1 tbsp grated ginger
1 tsp soy sauce

Preparation:

Stir the salt into the flour. Slowly stir in the cold water, adding as much as is necessary to form a smooth dough. Don't add more water than is necessary. Knead the dough into a smooth ball. Cover the dough and let it rest for at least 30 minutes. While the dough is resting, prepare the filling ingredients. Add the soy sauce, salt, rice wine and white pepper to the meat, stirring in only one direction. Add the remaining ingredients, stirring in the same direction, and mix well. To make the dumpling dough: knead the dough and divide the dough into 60 pieces. Roll each piece out into a circle about 3-inches in diameter.

Place a small portion (about 1 level tablespoon) of the filling into the middle of each wrapper. Wet the edges of the dumpling with water. Fold the dough over the filling into a half moon shape and pinch the edges to seal. Continue with the remainder of the dumplings.

To cook, bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add half the dumplings, giving them a gentle stir so they don't stick together. Bring the water to a boil, and add 1/2 cup of cold water. Cover and repeat. When the dumplings come to a boil for a third time, they are ready. Drain and remove.

To make dipping sauce: place all ingredients in a jar and shake well or whisk together in a bowl.

Serve the hot dumplings with the dipping sauce.

Elizabeth Binder

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Tasting Notes

2012 Estate Chardonnay

Our 2012 Chardonnay is barrel fermented in 35% new French oak barrels. Malolactic fermentation is done to completion helping to ensure the microbial stability of the finished wine. The wine is aged sur-lie for 10 months, undergoing a monthly bâtonnage to enhance the rich and full mouthfeel. A brilliant, lightly golden hued wine opens with toasty oak aromatics backed by strong pear aromatics laced with vanilla, spice, and a hint of fresh flowers. The mouthfeel is rich and full, coating the entire palate and finishing with a flavor reminiscent of a spiced pear tart that lingers well after the wine has made its exit.

Wine Advocate Reviews

Over the years, we have received many favorable reviews on our wine, particularly from the Wine Advocate and Wine Spectator. Many of our members are familiar with these reviews; they are printed here for the benefit of our newer members who may not have seen them.

Robert Parker Jr. has now retired from being the head taster at the Wine Advocate, a wine journal he founded in 1975. In his last year of tasting wines in Napa – 2010 – he gave our wines four 94 point scores (2007 Seduction, 2008 Seduction, 2008 Merlot Reserve, 2007 Unrestrained Reserve). Antonio Galloni succeeded Robert Parker for tasting Napa wines, but left the Wine Advocate earlier this year to pursue a separate endeavor. Robert Parker Jr. will again be reviewing Napa wines this year – we are looking forward to his opinions on our upcoming release.

2007 Seduction Bordeaux Blend 94 points

“The 2007 Seduction exhibits more graphite, licorice, black currant, and blackberry, with some floral underpinnings. I don’t like it better or worse than the 2008. Slightly more restrained, this gorgeous, medium to full-bodied wine is another impressive example of Napa viticulture at an attractive price point.”- Robert Parker

2010 Seduction Bordeaux Blend 94 points

“The 2010 Red Blend Seduction is one of the darker, richer wines in this range. Here, too, the tannins are quite silky and polished, making the wine quite enjoyable even at this early stage. Violets, mocha and cloves are layered into the rich, sumptuous finish. The appropriately named Seduction is indeed very hard to resist. I imagine it will be even better in another year or two, once some of the baby fat drops off. The blend is Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Anticipated maturity: 2015-2025.” - Antonio Galloni

2010 Chardonnay Reserve 93 points

“The 2010 Chardonnay Reserve is another striking wine from O’Brien. The sur-lie aging in French oak gives the wine notable breadth and volume, but without masking varietal character. The 2010 Reserve is gorgeous in the way it captures the exuberance of California Chardonnay, but with much more nuance and transparency than is common within this style. Almonds, floral infused honey and nectarines all come alive on the creamy, textured finish. The 2010 is rich, bold and beautiful. I would prefer to enjoy this striking Chardonnay in its exuberant youth. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2016.” - Antonio Galloni

2009 Devotion Cabernet Franc 92 points

“A gorgeous wine laced with hints of espresso, bitter chocolate, grilled herbs and dark red fruit. The wine possesses dazzling inner perfume and fabulous persistence all the way through to the finish. Sheer silky tannins convey an impression of elegance. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2024”. - Antonio Galloni

2010 Devotion Cabernet Franc 92 points

“The 2010 Cabernet Franc Devotion is another wine that stands out for its textural depth, finesse and sheer polish. There is plenty of varietal character in the glass, something I can’t always say about Napa Valley Cabernet Francs. Grilled herbs, mocha, plums, espresso and cloves are some of the many nuances that all meld together in this deep, fleshy wine. Layers of fruit continue to resonate on what seems like an eternal finish. The ripeness and softness of the tannin suggests the Devotion will drink well pretty much right out of the gate. Anticipated maturity: 2015-2025.” - Antonio Galloni

2010 Romance of the Heart Bordeaux Blend 93 points

The juiciest of dark raspberries, cloves, mint and freshly cut roses flow from the 2010 Red Blend Romance of the Heart. This supple, inviting wine possesses gorgeous depth and richness, all in a silky style that makes it approachable today. The 2010 firms up with time in the glass, but it remains quite polished and approachable for the year. Sweet herbal notes from the Cabernet Franc appear on the finish, adding further complexity and character. The Red Blend is Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Anticipated maturity: 2013-2020.

From our family to yours we wish you health and happiness! Thank you for being members of O’Brien Estate Wine Club.



Bart O'Brien



Barb O'Brien