



O'BRIEN ESTATE

NAPA VALLEY

MEMBER NEWSLETTER - MAY 2018

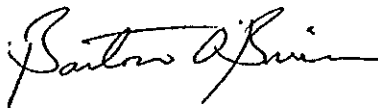
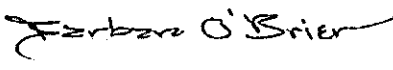
Dear Members,

As we write this, we are having a wonderful wet day in Napa Valley. Every day of rain is welcome as Napa Valley is still about 33% below average rainfall for this rain season, but this is enough to keep our wells flowing and our lakes full. And this late rain will help get the vines off for a new growing season.

One of the interesting aspects of owning a winery is the seasonality of the business each year. Every year we await bud break – this happens in the Chardonnay on March 16 like clockwork for each year we have owned the vineyard since 2000 – and then we fear frosty nights and rainless days. We only had to run our wind machines on 2 nights this year – those are large rust colored machines that are used to mix warmer air with the cold air on the ground next to the vines. Our cold nights in Napa Valley are very still and the cold air sinks to the ground, leaving the warmer air about 25' off the ground. It could be 28 degrees next to the ground and 35 degrees above it so we start up these huge fans, each powered by a 1978 451 cubic inch Ford V-8 engine driving an airplane propeller. On a cold night it sounds like an airport with the sound of the propellers from our wind machines and helicopter blades from the newer style wind machines belonging to our neighbors.

But these wonderful noises remind us that wine is an agricultural product. Watching the vines grow, day by day, and then be turned into wine during the fall crush, is one of the joys of our life. Another joy is traveling with our members on our annual cruises – we are looking forward to Alaska this August, then please mark your calendars for our 2019 Bordeaux River Cruise September 8 – 15 on Uniworld.

We look forward to hosting you at O'Brien Estate whenever you can make it back to see us.

THOUGHTS FROM OUR WINEMAKER

There are many facets to the role of winemaker and one of those requirements is to write tasting notes. It seems simple enough, but it is actually one of the more difficult tasks.

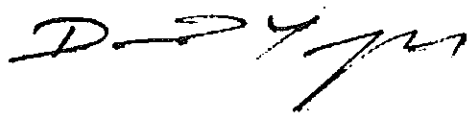
The purpose of a tasting note is to convey the character, expression, sensation, and details of a wine to someone else in a written form. This is often difficult because there isn't necessarily an understood common language for describing the attributes of wine, at least to the uninitiated wine consumer. For example when a wine is described as being "full-bodied and explosive" what does that really mean to someone reading a tasting note for the first time? How can a wine have an exploding body? It doesn't make any sense until we all know the super secret language used to describe wine. In this example the terms are describing how the presents of alcohol affect the wine. Full-bodied means the wine has richness derived from the present alcohol and explosive means that the present alcohol is volatilizing the aromatics and making them more distinguishable and recognizable.

It is in this language that a winemaker uses terms, concepts and ideas to try to elicit emotion and memory of past and known experiences and relate them to a wine. Chances are that most people will have more familiarity with other aromas and characters that they have somewhere experienced in their life. Fruits, such as cherries, are common descriptors in red wines, after all, we have been able to see, smell and taste cherries since childhood, so when a wine is described as having cherries, it doesn't necessarily mean the cherries are in the wine, but rather the wine is evoking a memory or emotion akin to either the smell, taste or texture of cherries and that can help someone better understand the intricate complexities of aroma, flavor and texture of a wine.

Descriptors such as tar, tobacco, wet stone, cat pee, and many more, can be confusing at first until a person recalls from their memory the history of experience and sensation they have had with these in their lives, then as the thoughts of these fill their minds, and the wine fills their senses does it all start to make sense and chip away at the cryptic wordings of a tasting note.

Remember, tasting notes are there to help better understand the wines through a winemaker's word, but it is equally important to use you vast history of sensational memory to pull the greatest amount of pleasure you can from a wine.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Yorgensen', written in a cursive style.

David Yorgensen, Consulting Winemaker



2018 MEMBER EVENTS & TRIPS

2018 MEMBER DINNERS

We hope you can join us and connect with other members at our intimate winery dinners. Please make sure to reserve your place(s) as soon as you finalize your travel plans as these events sell out immediately.

A Night of Unrestrained Dinner Dance - Saturday, September 22

2018 WINE PICK-UP DAYS

If you live nearby or happen to be in town, please join us! Come enjoy a glass of wine, some small bites and connect with other wine club members. Be sure to RSVP to let us know you are coming, so we can have your wines packed. If you usually pick up your wines and are unable to come on these dates, please call to make arrangements to pick up your wine within 30 days. *NOTE: These dates are subject to change - please check our website for updates!*

Sunday, May 20	1 - 4 pm
Sunday, September 9	1 - 4 pm
Sunday, November 4	1 - 4 pm

O'BRIEN ESTATE HITS THE ROAD

Let us bring our wines to you and your friends! We continue traveling across the country to help members host private evenings and dinners featuring our wines at your home, favorite restaurant, or private club. Please contact Luis Pettinato at luis@obrienestate.com for further details about scheduling one of our exclusive member events in your hometown.

UPCOMING MEMBER TRIPS

For more information, check our website www.obrienestate.com/Members/CruisesandTrips

It may be too late to join Barb & Bart on their third bus tour of medieval Ireland May 19-27, 2018, and their ****SOLD OUT**** Oceania cruise through the wilds of "Alaska: The Last Frontier" in August, but another adventure awaits you in 2019: Bordeaux!

NEW FOR 2019! O'Brien Estate and Food & Wine Trails will team again for a river cruise through the vineyards and châteaux of Bordeaux Sept 8-15, 2019, aboard Uniworld's newly refurbished SS Royale. Bordeaux is an oenophile's paradise and every traveler's dream, from its noble châteaux to its breathtaking estuary. Come discover the proud legacy of one of the world's most acclaimed wine regions on this culinary focused cruise. *Details to follow.*



O'BRIEN ESTATE

HAPA VALLEY

TASTING NOTES - CURRENT VINTAGE REDS

2014 MERLOT

Our 2014 Estate Merlot is a rich, dark, and concentrated; loaded with plum, blackberry, and huckleberry aromas. The mouthfeel is supple and balanced, with lingering flavors of dark fruit and nuances of mocha and spice. ~ Mark Davis, Winemaker

2014 ROMANCE OF THE HEART, BORDEAUX-STYLE BLEND

Expressively focused on a dense core of assorted cherries, the 2014 Romance of the Heart displays loads of red cherries, black cherries, cherries jubilee and chocolate covered cherry aromas and flavors that dominate the senses. This wine is full flavored, delicious, and enjoyable. While cherries may be at the forefront, blackcurrant, plum and spice notes add complexity and interest to the full-bodied and well-structured mouthfeel and finish. ~ David Yorgensen, Consulting Winemaker

2014 SEDUCTION, BORDEAUX-STYLE BLEND

Dense, opaque and concentrated the 2014 Seduction tantalizes the senses with the complex interplay of rich dark berries, cherries, blackcurrants and sweet, toasty oak savors that unite with hints of graphite and earth in an intricate assembly across the palate. Densely structured, distinguished and full-bodied on the palate, this wine is packed with flavor and a fantastic texture that lasts and lasts. ~ David Yorgensen, Consulting Winemaker

2014 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon is a big and bold wine. Inky purple in color, this wine is packed with blackberry, dark cherry, cassis, and subtle oak aromatics. Although it is big on flavors, the mouthfeel is soft and balanced. Full bodied and rich, yet enlaced with supple tannins that finish in a velvety touch. ~ Mark Davis, Winemaker

2012 REFLECTION DESSERT WINE (375 ML)

Our 2012 Late Harvest dessert wine, Reflection, is the perfect pairing for after dinner. Boysenberry jam, blackberry pie, and hints of licorice greet you from the glass. The mouthfeel is delicate and silky, with hints of sweetness and a finish that is soft and dense with candied dark fruit. ~ Mark Davis, Winemaker

TASTING NOTES - CURRENT VINTAGE WHITES

2017 SAUVIGNON BLANC, FASCINATION **NEW RELEASE**

Crisp and refreshing, the 2017 Sauvignon Blanc enriches the senses with hints of lemon zest, key lime, stone and mineral notes. The full-bodied finish is polished, penetrating, and balanced with a lingering finish on the palate; perfect for the warm days of summer. ~ Mark Davis, Winemaker

2017 UNOAKED CHARDONNAY, ATTRACTION **NEW RELEASE**

The 2017 Attraction Unoaked Chardonnay, is interlaced with aromas of fresh pear, citrus, and kumquat. The mouthfeel is brilliant with a balanced acidity, a touch of mineralogy, and a delightful finish of fresh fruit. ~ Mark Davis, Winemaker

2016 CHARDONNAY **NEW RELEASE**

The 2016 Chardonnay is rich and flavorful. The nose is complex and enticing revealing aromas of baked pear, vanilla, and hints of spice. The mouthfeel is full and inviting showcasing the balanced acidity and lasting finish of stone fruit and honeysuckle. ~ Mark Davis, Winemaker

RESERVE WINES

2014 RESERVE CHARDONNAY - ONLY 140 CASES PRODUCED

The 2014 Reserve Chardonnay, aged for 18 months on 100% new French Oak, delights the senses with ripe pear, caramel, and a toasty oak. The opulent mouthfeel is big and bold, with a protracted and pure finish doused with pomaceous fruit, vanilla, and spice. ~ David Yorgensen, Winemaker

LIBRARY WINES

LIBRARY: 2013 ROMANCE OF THE HEART

Luscious and lively, the 2013 Romance of the Heart blend is opulent with aromas of black currant, boysenberry, and baker's chocolate. A rich mouthfeel coats the palate and leaves a juicy, lingering fruit finish. ~ David Yorgensen, Winemaker



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ARTICHOKES

The Bee's Knees

Growing up in Southern California, my mother would serve fresh steamed artichokes to our family long before they became popular. I was fascinated by this formidable looking vegetable with its spiky leaves and fuzzy "choke" at the center. We would love to share one at the dinner table, pulling off the leaves one by one and dipping them into melted butter or mayonnaise and savoring its nutty earthy flavor and buttery texture. And then, of course, a friendly food fight for the tender heart at the bottom would ensue between me and my 3 sisters.

Native to the Mediterranean, the artichoke plant is a species of thistle and what we eat is the flower bud. The "leaves" are actually petals of the flower. 99.9% of all commercially grown artichokes are grown in California and in 2013 Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed it the official vegetable of California.

Like wine grapes, artichokes need cool nights and warm days, and they thrive here in Napa Valley. I grow these beautiful perennial plants in my vegetable garden and they are a show stopper! They grow to 5 feet across and almost as high. The large silvery-green leaves add contrast and an architectural element to my garden.

The first crop is ready in late spring followed by a second smaller crop in the fall. I discovered that if I neglected to pick the crop while the artichoke leaves were still tightly closed, it was too late. But procrastination sometimes has its rewards.... By letting the buds go to bloom, I found that the artichoke blooms are a stunning 6 inch wide lavender-blue that last for weeks.

They are also bee and other pollinator magnets and the broad flat blooms provide a landing platform the bees love. A healthy colony of wild honey bees has made its home in a wall of the winery for the past 20 years or more. We have all heard of the worrisome decline of honey bee populations due to disease, pesticide use, and loss of foraging habitat. So now we intentionally choose to buy most of our fresh artichokes at the farmers market and leave the rest for the bees.

I hope you enjoy the following recipe for grilled artichokes which fittingly pairs well with our "Fascination" Sauvignon Blanc!

Cheers!

Barb O'Brien

Grilled Artichokes

When buying artichokes, select ones that are heavy for their size, have tightly closed olive green leaves and healthy stems.

Ingredients

- 4 globe artichokes
- 1 lemon, halved
- 1 Tbs. peppercorns
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Preparation

- 1) Cut off the top one-third of the artichoke. Use kitchen shears to trim off any remaining thorny petal tips. Trim and peel stems.
- 2) Fill a large pot with 2 inches of water. Squeeze the lemon juice into the water and add the lemon halves, pepper corns and garlic cloves. Boil artichokes (or steam in a steamer insert) until bottoms pierce easily or a leaf pulls off easily, 15 to 20 minutes.
- 3) Drain artichokes and cool.
- 4) Cut each artichoke in half lengthwise and scrape out the fuzzy center and any purple tipped petals and discard. Drizzle the cut sides with olive oil.

Place cut side down on a grill over a solid bed of medium coals or on a grill pan on medium heat. Grill until lightly browned on the cut side 5 to 7 minutes. Turn artichokes over, drizzle remaining olive oil. Grill until leaf tips are lightly charred, 3 to 4 minutes more.

Season with salt and pepper. Serve hot or room temperature.

Yields 8 servings, ½ artichoke each.

Aioli

Ingredients (at room temperature)

- 2 large egg yolks, organic
- 2- 2.5 cups extra virgin olive oil
- 4-5 garlic cloves, smashed into a paste

Preparation

Stir egg yolks with wire whisk for a minute or so until slightly thickened. Add oil one tablespoon at a time, whisking well to create an emulsion. Incorporate the oil completely after each addition to keep smooth. After incorporating a half-cup of oil, begin to whisk in remaining oil at a faster pace. Add a tablespoon of water to thin as necessary - the finished sauce should have the consistency of softly whipped cream.

Stir in garlic, a good pinch of salt and a little fresh ground pepper. Let stand for a few minutes, refrigerate, and use within a few hours.

While purists say a true Aioli has only 3 ingredients, you might enjoy seasoning the aioli with curry powder, mashed chipotle chilies or some juice and zest from a Meyer lemon.