



April/May 2003

WILSON CREEK WINERY & VINEYARDS

Issue 11

“Fine Wines & Quality Times!”

Jazz Concerts & Music Events



Above: Jazz guitarist Craig Chaquico performs Saturday, July 19

Right: Jazz saxophonist Eric Marienthal performs Saturday, October 18



Left: Jazz saxophonist, Jason Weber will be playing in our gazebo the 1st and 3rd Sundays of every other month.

Weddings

Receptions are held outside, under the stars, or in our wedding pavilion.



Wedding pavilion seats 200 guests.

EVENTS CENTRAL

WE'RE NOT JUST A WINERY YOU KNOW — LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!

Join Wilson Creek for the Sunset Jazz Concert Series this summer. Consider us for a memorable wedding and reception in beautiful Wine Country. Weddings book about a year in advance so call for dates (calendar dates that is, we don't do any matchmaking for you ☺) We also host corporate events, reunions, seminars, etc. By the way, your 10% event discount applies to Wilson Creek events that are open to the public such as Jazz Concerts, and Wilson Creek Harvest Party.



Above: Joey & Maria's Italian Dinner Comedy



Above right: Harvest Festival & Grape Stomp

Events



Left: This was last year's Wine Club BBQ. Winemaker, Mike Calabro, with a wine club member, and Craig Johns pouring samples from the barrel.

Many more upcoming events — Details inside !



We host Corporate Dinners



STORM GAME WINNER

20 lucky Wine Club members (not luck, they were the first to call or drop by to get the tickets) attended the pre-season game where the San Diego Padres played the Lake Elsinore Storm. Here, Josh Addison was the winner selected from the 20 to receive a VIP pass to the pre-game party in the Diamond Club. Alongside him are Wilson Creek staff: Nicole, Alicen, Eva, and Libby Johns. Notice the Storm private labels on our Almond Champagne and the chocolate cup box with the Chocolate Port.



This is Mick and Bill Wilson in one of their ways they resolve conflict – by Sumo wrestling. Nah, this was taken at Cassidy Wilson’s (Bill’s daughter) birthday at Airtime Party Center in Murrieta.



NEW BARTENDERS

Next time you visit, say HELLO to Wes and Diana, two of our new wine servers!

“GREAT WINE INSPIRES, IMPRESSES, INVIGORATES, AND PERHAPS MOST SIGNIFICANTLY OF ALL, INTRIGUES.”

-JANCIS ROBINSON

“LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO DRINK BAD WINE”

- ON A THROW PILLOW ON MICK’S SOFA

Family Biz



Here are the Wilson family adults posing in a rare formal picture (yes, we do have dresses and tuxes in Wine Country ☺). This was taken at the Temecula Chamber of Commerce Installation Dinner where Gerry and Rosie presented the award for “Temecula Valley Business of the Year,” because Wilson Creek was last year’s winner.

It’s all about Fine Wines & Quality Times!



Gerry and Rosie Wilson presenting “Music Director’s Private Reserve” Almond Champagne to Carl St. Clair, and the guest soloist at a post-Pacific Symphony party.



Here we are with Christopher Trela, the Director of Public Relations for the Pacific Symphony and a fellow Wine Club member. He got us the tickets and post-party passes. Thanks Chris!

PACIFIC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Music Director’s Private Reserve



Carl St. Clair, Music Director
ALMOND CHAMPAGNE

By the way, if any other Wine Club members out there have any desire to do something similar for Gerry and Rosie in your area of work or via your connections, don’t hesitate to call us ☺.

A CINDERELLA STORY - 1996 CABERNET BLOWS AWAY RENOWNED WINE COLUMNIST

We recently heard a story from a member who loved our 1996 Estate Cabernet. He met with a highly regarded wine columnist in Florida who was also a noted wine expert. They organized a blind tasting with three reds. Two of the reds were world renown. The third red? Well, that is the Cinderella story!

1. A 1997 Buena Vista "Latour" (received 94 points from Robert Parker. This wine is incredible. The 1997 vintage was one of BV's best)
2. A 1989 Margeaux (an award-winning French wine)
3. 1996 Wilson Creek Inaugural Cabernet Sauvignon

Well, guess who won? Yep, our Cab! The wine columnist was shocked that a wine from Temecula blew away two world-class reds. The word is slowly getting out about Temecula wine: World-class quality without the world-class price tag.

RESULTS FROM THE NEW WORLD INTERNATIONAL WINE COMPETITION

We have only entered one competition thus far, and came back with numerous awards. Not bad for a small winery in Temecula. Remember, these competitions have wines represented from all over California and all over the world (over 675 wineries represented). The New International Wine Competition awarded us medals on these wines:

- **Grand Cuvee:** Silver Medal - Presentation
- **2001 Estate Chardonnay:** Bronze Medal, Silver - Presentation
- **Reserve Syrah:** Gold Medal and Best of Class, Gold Medal - Presentation
- **White Cabernet Sauvignon:** Gold Medal- Presentation
- **Gewurztraminer:** Gold Medal- Presentation
- **Sangiovese:** Silver Medal- Presentation
- **Cabernet Sauvignon:** Bronze Medal, Silver Medal - Presentation
- **Almond Champagne:** Silver Medal- Presentation (Won a Gold medal at California State Fair last year. California State Fair judging is in the summer)
- **Merlot:** Bronze Medal
- **2001 Mourvedre:** Silver Medal
- **Green Hungarian:** Silver Medal
- **Muscat Canelli:** Silver Medal
- **Chocolate Port:** Silver Medal

Note: The "Presentation Award" is given to the wine with the best overall presentation including the bottle, capsule, and especially the label. We will keep you posted as we enter more competitions this year.



VINES ARE BUDDING

Right now the vines are just beginning to bud. Notice the itty bitty clusters of baby grapes. They have been barren since December, so the little green we have is a welcome sight. This is a time, however, that we worry about frost. A new bud on a vine is very fragile and susceptible to frost (when temperature drops below 32 degrees). That is why you see in the movies (like Walk in the Clouds) people circulating the heat with large arm fans from fires lit between the vines. Today vineyards use a combination of oil pots/fires and huge fans that circulate the air (dormant cold air is what hurts the vines). Some turn on sprinklers which keeps the frost off. We don't have any of those defenses (we mainly use drip irrigation), so we just cross our fingers. If we get desperate we may call some of you up in the middle of the night and have you bring some Duraflame logs over, or a lot of tiki torches.

FAQ's

Q: Can we have our wine delivered without an adult signature required?

A: Federal law prohibits delivery of wine without an adult signature. That is why we encourage shipping to a business address, or to a neighbor you really trust ☺.

Q: When will I receive my "adoption card" after I join?

A: Please allow three weeks to receive your card. If after a month you haven't received your card, please call us.

Q: I'm on "will call" so how do I know the wine is ready to pick up?

A: We will send you a postcard, letting you know all is well to pick-up. If you didn't receive your postcard by the 20th of the month of the shipment (remember, we ship every other month), call us to see if your shipment is ready. Keep in mind, take advantage of your free tasting and try some new releases when you pick up the wine. We also ask that you not substitute the wines in the shipment for other wines. The credit card has been pre-charged, and the shipment has been already packaged. If you want additional wines, take advantage of your 20% discount and 25% case discount!!

Q: When is my credit card charged and when can I expect delivery?

A: We charge the credit card at the middle of the month every other month, usually around the 15th. Sometimes a tad earlier, sometimes a tad later. We try to charge the card as close to the date of shipment as possible so your shipment goes out within a week. So you can expect delivery 4-10 days after the middle of the month, depending on where you live in the country. If you did not get a shipment by the end of the month that we ship (next June, August, October, December, etc.) please contact us so we can find out what happened.

Please check your credit cards: Are they expiring soon? If so, call us with your new expiration date and/or card number. Don't miss out on June's shipment!

Buy Wilson Creek Wine Online: Did you know that you can order wine online and get your Wine Club discount online? It is simple. You only need to register online once, then when you re-order, our fancy shopping cart remembers your information. Our site is totally secure.



Wilson Creek Winery *Upcoming Events*

Wilson Creek Winery & The Vineyard Valley's Women's Club present **AN AFTERNOON OF ART & WINE**

Sunday, May 4, 2-6PM

Join us for a buffet dinner and wine tasting, while enjoying both a silent and live Art Auction to benefit Hospice of the Valleys as well as local high school scholarship programs. \$25 per person includes the buffet dinner, music, wine tasting, and raffle.



WINE CLUB SKYDIVING DAY

Saturday, May 10th

Have you ever dreamed of jumping out of an airplane (one that is airborne of course)? Here is your chance to skydive at a discounted price (\$175 for an instructor assisted jump). So there are no more excuses! The price includes the briefing/training, an instructor assisted jump, the parachute ☺, and a Champagne celebration afterwards (if you want a video of your jump it will be extra). You will also receive a FREE bottle of Almond Champagne personalized for you as a "trophy" for doing the jump. We will meet at the drop zone at Skydive Elsinore in Lake Elsinore. Call us or email us for more information. C'mon, go for it! Remember, Rosie and Gerry Wilson did. If you are curious about the operation at Skydive Elsinore and want to know what the jump entails, check out their web site at www.skydiveelsinore.com



SUPPORT THE TROOPS EVENT

Thursday, May 8th, 5:30PM - 7:30PM

This is our way to say to the troops (and the families back home) how many people in Southern California support them. We have been brainstorming this idea as we interacted with our contacts with the Navy and Marines, as well as some media who want to promote this event. It will be a fundraiser for "Operation Home-front" which helps encourage and support the families here at home. A good portion of the proceeds will be donated. Enjoy food and wine amongst visiting dignitaries and visiting military. Check out our web site for more information at www.wilsoncreekwinery.com

Mother's Day **CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH**

Sunday, May 11

Treat Mom to a day in the vineyards with an elegant champagne brunch designed to make moms feel special. Featuring an incredible array of gourmet brunch stations and bottomless Almond & Cuvée champagne. Live jazz will accompany the meal. We sold out last year, so book your reservations early. Call us or email us! Two seatings available: 10:00-12PM, 1PM-3PM. \$55 adults. Children ages 6-12, \$20. Children 5 and under are free.

WINE CLUB BBQ & BARREL TASTING

Friday night, May 16th, from 7-9PM

Back by popular demand. Taste some fine eats as you taste some fine wines. Price includes 2 drink tickets, full BBQ, and tasting some wine out of the barrel. Price is \$28 for Wine Club members and up to three guests (additional guests, over three, are \$34) \$18 for designated drivers (food and non-alcohol drinks).



Temecula Valley Winegrowers Assoc. Events

SPRING PASSPORT WINE TASTING

May 16- 18, 22 Wineries

Visit 18 Temecula Wineries while grazing your way through Wine Country. Enjoy spectacular wines paired perfectly with "wine friendly" foods. The definitive answer to first class Wine Country entertainment. 10:00AM - 4:30PM Tickets are good for one visit only to each winery. Contact the Temecula Valley Winegrowers at **1-800-801-WINE** or order online at www.temeculawines.org Spring Passport Wine Tasting \$65 each

WILSON CREEK

2ND ANNUAL COMMUNITY BANDFEST

Saturday, May 31 and Sunday, June 1st

Enjoy an afternoon listening to full 25-40 piece bands play on our jazz stage. Picnic to the music of John Williams, and more. Thirteen bands are participating, playing back to back music all weekend. FREE admission. Bring your picnic blankets and beach chairs. On-site BBQ available.

20TH ANNUAL TEMECULA VALLEY BALLOON & WINE FESTIVAL

June 6-8th

THE big event of the year at Lake Skinner.

Wine tasting, crafts, live music, food, and much more. Mark it on your calendar.



Temecula Valley Winegrowers Assoc. Events

WINEMAKER'S GOLD DINNER & AUCTION

July 12th - An elegant 5 course dinner pairing food and medal winning wines. \$125 per person.

VINE2WINE CELEBRATION

August 3rd - For more information call **1-800-801-WINE** or go online at www.temeculawines.org.

SUNSET JAZZ IN THE VINES - CONCERT SERIES

- Saturday, July 19
- Saturday, September 20
- Friday, August 15
- Saturday, October 18

Sponsored by Guidant.

See Insert for Details

ANNUAL HARVEST PARTY, GRAPE STOMP & CHILI COOK OFF

Our biggest event of the year!

Saturday, October 11th

Chow down with a Texas-style pit BBQ, enjoy live music all day, stomp grapes Lucille-Ball-style & taste some of the best darn chili in Temecula! Kids' activities, too. A fun day for the whole family. \$35 for adults, includes food, chili tasting & two drink tickets. Children 12 & under, free admission. \$5 for kids' meals. Proceeds benefit Rotary of Temecula. Chili cooks wanted!



ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA Always a sell-out! Wednesday, December 31

Dress to the nines and dance the night away in our enormous party pavilion. Tray-passed hors d'oeuvres, a sit-down elegant dinner and hosted Wilson Creek Wine & Champagne all evening. Balloon drop at midnight, fun party favors & live music on stage all night! The best party in town. \$150-175 per person, inclusive.

In the Planning Stage

WINE CLUB GOLF TOURNEY

We are in the planning stage of a fun Wine Club golf tournament. We are attempting to have one Wine tasting at each hole (OK, how about every other hole ☺). 18 wine tastings might lead to some pretty crazy golf out there on the back 9). Then after the tournament we will have awards along with some food. Scramble format. Awards for longest drive, highest score, closest to the pin, most balls lost, shortest drive, etc. More information and exact dates in the next newsletter. Does this sound like fun? Let us know!



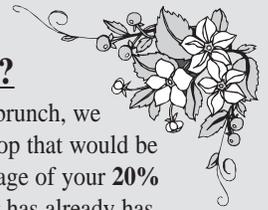
Mick (front row), Bill, J.R. and Gerry Wilson at another golf tournament last year. Actually J.R. (with the straw hat) who is one of our amazing wine servers, actually made most of the good shots; we just were along for the ride ☺.

CIGAR NIGHT

Quite a few of you mentioned you would like to do another cigar night where we pair fine cigars with an elegant dinner and our premium wine. We will begin the evening with appetizers and a great cigar, then enjoy a great meal, then ending with our chocolate port with a decadent chocolate dessert paired with a closing cigar. More information to come in the next newsletter. Sound good?

LOOKING FOR A MOTHER'S DAY PRESENT?

Besides our elegant Mother's Day brunch, we have many new items in the gift shop that would be perfect for mom. Hey, take advantage of your **20% discount**. One Wine Club member has already ordered a personalized case of Almond Champagne for their mom (nice touch we thought).



GOT POETRY?

Here's a chance to get those creative juices flowing. We would like Wine Club members to write and submit poetry. Write a poem about Wilson Creek wine or Wilson Creek Winery. Print it and mail it in or email it to wine@wilsoncreekwinery.com by May 10th. Hey, if you are one of the five chosen, you get a free bottle of personalized Almond Champagne, and bragging rights that your poetry was "published." Our tasting room staff will be the judges (just know that we will be sipping wine together after work as we go through these, so a good idea is for you to sip wine as you write. Brown-nosing staff or Wilson family members is acceptable ☺ but real poetry will likely win out). So sit down with a glass of wine and let your imagination go. Here are some samples submitted by a staff member

Slurping wine, the professional way.

Curling up with that good Cabernet.

With good wine, worries take flight.

Enjoying good friends well into the night.

Tasting with my mind, my heart warmed a long while.

See how this wine forms a beautiful smile

Poetry about Wilson Creek that will likely not win:

Lines at the restroom, gosh I have to go.

If I go in the vines will anyone know?

Or how about this one:

Cabernet is Red, White Cabernet is blue

If you want any more than that, I haven't a clue.

See why we need your help?

GOT FEEDBACK?

We love hearing your thoughts about the Wine Club newsletter. Let us know what you want more of, or what annoys you and you want to see deleted... or any suggestions at all. Also, please let us know if there's a subject you would like to know about in an upcoming issue such as information about oak barrels, growing grapes, winemaking, tasting tips, etc.

REFER SOMEONE TO THE WINE CLUB AND GET FREE WINE

Many of you have learned that when you refer someone to the Wine Club, you get a free bottle of Almond Champagne with a personalized label, shipped to you FREE. Just email us or call us with the name of the person you referred (or when they join with you at the winery, just let us know right then). We will make the label (limit 10 words of your choice) and ship the bottle to you FREE.



THIS SHIPMENT'S FEATURE WINES

We are proud of our wines, and we want our Wine Club to get our BEST. Therefore we love to send you the cream of the crop. Yes, the White Cabernet it back!

2002 WHITE CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Back by popular (very popular) demand. We made our first White Cabernet last year and it flew out the doors. Many of you raved about it. So we did it again this year, and again, it is a gorgeous wine.

Our White Cabernet is made from Estate grapes that are exquisite (the red Estate Cabernet Sauvignon goes for \$32.95/bottle). So you are getting a wine from an award-winning vineyard. The only difference is that this was fermented without the skins. We have only entered it in one competition thus far, but last year the 2000 White Cabernet won Gold Medal, a Silver Medal, and Best of Class. I have also seen many empty White Cabernet blue bottles used as candle holders in Wine Club member's homes. Not a bad idea.

Q: How do you get a white wine out of a red grape?

When you visit us this summer you will see grapes on the vines. Pick a red grape and squeeze it in your hand. You'll see that the juice is clear. So how does a red wine become red? We ferment red wines in the large steel tanks WITH THE SKINS. That means that the color, pigment, and tannins from the skins interact with the wine. The color comes from the SKINS, not the juice. After the 2 week fermentation, we press the skins from the juice (kinda like taking a bunch of chopped up grapes and pushing them through a spaghetti strainer). The pressing separates the wine from the skins. The red wine is aged in barrels and the skins are put on the soil in the vineyard for compost. The difference with a White Cabernet, is that we press the skins away from the juice BEFORE fermentation. So there is no contact with the skins during fermentation. So the wine stays white (OK, a tad pink). This is how White Zin is made, which is typically a cheap and less tasty wine.

Tasting menu notes:

GOLD Medal - Presentation

\$22.95/bottle, \$234.12/case

Wine Club price: \$18.36/bottle, \$206.55/case

An extremely popular wine here because of its unique flavor, dynamic taste, and beautiful blue bottle. See why restaurants, wine experts, and many others have raved about this rare treasure! Serve chilled.

2000 MERLOT

Many of you remember our Gold award winning 2000 Reserve Merlot. After we sold out of that rather quickly we bottled some more Merlot from the same vineyard. So this Merlot is the brother of the 2000 Reserve Merlot, just from a different part of the vineyard. The two Merlots are similar, but different. Many of you like this bottling much better. It has more tannins and oak characteristics due to almost an additional year sitting in French oak barrels. Because they were a tad different we chose not to call this "reserve" although it is from the same year and vineyard, so people wouldn't get confused. Or did I just confuse you? Anyway, it is a great wine and very, very enjoyable to drink. Sip it slowly and savor every drop!

Tasting menu notes:

BRONZE Medal – New World Wine Competition

\$24.95/bottle, \$254.52/case

Wine Club price: \$19.96/bottle, \$224.52/case

A smooth yet bold red wine that bursts with flavors of black cherry, plum and current. A classic Merlot. It is great to enjoy now, but this is the kind of wine where aging has its rewards.

PRICE OF THIS SHIPMENT:

2002 White Cabernet	\$22.95
2000 Merlot	\$24.95
Total with 20% discount	\$38.32
Tax in CA only	\$2.96
Shipping varies	

JUNE SHIPMENT PREVIEW

We plan on sending you our 2001 Reserve Syrah that won Gold and Best of Class in its first competition. That is HUGE by the way. This is no small competition. To win Gold and Best of Class with 675 wineries represented is an amazing feat. We want this wine to soften in the bottle a tad more, so we feel it will be ideal for the June Wine Club shipment. By the way, we bottled this Reserve Syrah for Wine Club only. So the cases we have left after the shipment will be available to members only. First come first serve. Only 50 cases will be left for sale to members after the shipment.

WINE RELEASES DATES

Many, many of you have asked when certain wines will be released. Here is our updated information:

- **2000 Double Dog "Old Vine" Zinfandel:** This amazing wine will now be re-released (hopefully, if labels come in time) on May 1st. Only 40 cases left. Wine Club members only can buy this amazing wine. We are looking to bottle a 2001 Double Dog Zin soon. Get ready!
- **2001 Estate Zinfandel:** To be bottled and released this summer. A killer Zin! Futures available now!
- **2001 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon:** To be bottled this summer and released late summer. Futures available now!
- **2001 Reserve Syrah:** To be released to the Wine Club only in the June shipment.
- **2001 Mourvedre:** Silver medal winner. Release in May.
- **Duet Late Harvest Zin/Cab:** Released by the end of April. A cherry cheesecake in a bottle.
- **Angelica Cream Sherry:** Released by the end of April. Like a warm sunset in a glass.
- **1996 Inaugural Cabernet Sauvignon:** Remember, we will be re-releasing this gem on our parent's 50th wedding anniversary on August 2nd. It will go for \$100/bottle, and for you who know this wine, that is a value! Only about 40 cases left. First come first serve. For sale to Wine Club members only.

ATTENTION PETITE SYRAH LOVERS

Hey, there's a tiny bit of 2000 Wine Club Petite Syrah left: **Yep, you read right! We have only 25 cases of this amazing wine left for sale to Wine Club members only. Many of you know and love this wine. This is the same wine we shipped out a few shipments ago, that got rave reviews from many, many of you! A wine like this doesn't come along every year! Not much left – so come and get it (or call us or email your order)!**



USS Roosevelt

Affectionately known as "Big Stick"

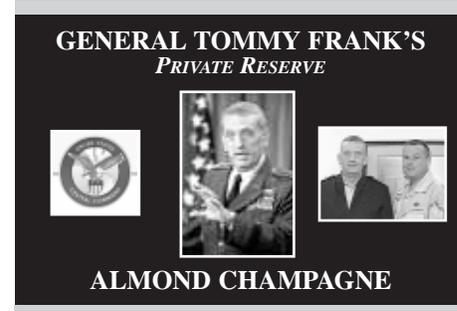
THE U.S. NAVY AND WILSON CREEK

As you watch the war in Iraq, notice that two of the Aircraft Carriers over there are two of the carriers for which we bottled and labeled a "Captain's Private Reserve." We are unofficially the official winery of the USS CONSTELLATION and the USS ROOSEVELT. The Captain and officers use the labeled wine for personal gifts and use, but the Captain uses it for gifts to dignitaries when they visit a port, and for formal dinners with heads of state, dinners with foreign brass, etc. By the way, if you know of any military personnel who would like personalized labels, we do give a nice military discount. Call us for more information.

GENERAL'S PRIVATE RESERVE

We recently designed a personalized label for a General and Colonel now serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. One is Army (CENTCOM) and the other is Marine (1 Marine Expeditionary Force). This is just a little way to say "thanks" from us at home. Deanna (who oversees distribution and our personalized labels) has a close cousin (pictured with General Franks) who is one of the personal bodyguards for General Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM numero uno honcho in Operation Iraqi Freedom. So we designed a label for Deanna's cousin

to give to General Franks when he is a little less busy of course. But he will get it soon!



GRAPELINE WINE CLUB DRAWING WINNER

We had an online drawing on our web site (www.wilsoncreekwinery.com) where many of you simply entered your name to enter the contest for a free limo day in a NICE limo bus. The Grapeline wine tour is a great way to see the valley here. The Grapeline circulates throughout the wineries so you can wine taste without the hassle of driving. So Christina Adaska of San Diego gets a full day for herself and 5 friends on a chauffeured trip through Wine Country. With the Grapeline you also get a value passport that is good for discounts and 2 for 1 wine tasting at some wineries. Check them out at www.gogrape.com Check out our web site for the next free drawing.

What's This?

This is a sketch of what we do to Wine Club members who walk off with our nice Wine Club glasses ☺.



Remember, those glasses stay at the winery so we can wash them so other Wine Club

members can enjoy tasting out of the large glasses too! Notice the evidence in this sketch, the glass in the hand! Busted.

ADDITIONAL RESTROOMS

I realize this may be tacky, but what a beautiful sight for many of you who have waited in line for a restroom at Wilson Creek. This

picture is obviously of the men's side, women tell me that using urinals on the wall is quite challenging for them.



It's True

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

TIM HENRY



We recently hired a Warehouse Manager. And a darn good one at that. Tim hails from Iowa. He is one of those behind-the-scenes people that make this winery tick. His last warehouse he managed was only 12 acres big, so I think he can handle our warehouse.

Q: What is the difference between Wilson Creek and your last job? The last job was full of stress,

deadlines, and rush, rush, rush. I still get the job done, but I have learned to stress less, and chill out more.

Q: What do you like about Wilson Creek? I was accepted the first minute I stepped in the door. Everyone here is energetic and fun to work with. There is a good "vibe" in the atmosphere.

Q: What is something interesting that not everyone knows about you? I have the "Three F's" that I have learned in life that help keep me focused 1) Family: staying close with good friends and family is critical, 2) Flavor: life is full of spice and flavor but we sometimes do not slow down to notice. Like when drinking a good wine, one must pay attention to the wine to appreciate the bountiful flavors that we sometimes just blow through and miss in tasting wine. Same with life! 3) Fun: Hey, if we take ourselves and situations too seriously we miss out on having fun. I have learned to lighten up a lot more and have more fun throughout the day.

Q: How is your tan coming along? I drive to work in a convertible in the middle of the winter. WOW! I laid out by the pool where I now live while enjoying a beautiful glass of wine. Pinch me, am I dreaming?

WINE PRESERVER

Tasting Room Feature Product

Don't you hate it when you open a nice bottle of wine, and then the next day it has gone bad? So how do you store a half opened bottle of wine? What is the best way to keep a nice wine from getting oxidized so you can enjoy it another day? There are three typical ways – the last one is our favorite.



1. Put it in the refrigerator and do nothing else.

This works with cheap white wine or box wine, but if you have a nice red wine, it really does not prevent the air from getting to the wine.

Sure, it slows down the oxidation process, but the wine never really tastes the same after being chilled awhile. After a day or two, the air will break the wine down. Plus, when you want a nice glass of red again, the bottle is too cold and you have to wait for it to warm up (and we have a tough time being patient with wines right in front of us nagging us to be consumed!).

2. Use the vacuum pumps: These do work, because they pull out the oxygen that breaks down your good wine. But there are two criticisms on the wine vacuums, a) The pump pulls out aromas that may affect the wine (I wonder who could really tell, but this is a criticism) and b) It is a hassle. Yep, get out the rubber cork, get out the wine vacuum pump (it's plastic and only about 4 inches long), pump out the air, and store the wine. Takes about a minute, but for lazy people like me it's too much of a hassle so I do the next option.

3. Use Wine Preserver: This is ingenious stuff. It is a gas that comes in a spray can with a long straw connected to the nozzle. We actually gas our giant fermentation tanks (not with cans of course, but large tanks). Because our tanks also have a pocket of air on top of the wine (most tanks are never full to the top) the oxygen can break down the wine, like in the bottle. So we spray a tad of Nitrogen gas on top of the wine (some wineries use CO₂ which does the same job). Because these gasses are heavier than oxygen, they form an inert layer of gas that acts as a protective blanket over the wine, keeping the oxygen from contacting the wine. Kind of like an invisible layer of Saran Wrap. These gasses do not affect the wine, only protect it. Someone, somewhere got the idea to do this same thing for wine BOTTLES. Thus, Wine Preserver was invented. It has CO₂, nitrogen and argon gas that is inert (no effect on the wine). Yep, keep a can of this handy, so when you have a half bottle left, simply squirt some short bursts into the bottle and it keeps for up to a week (I understand it can be kept longer, but a half bottle doesn't last that long in my house. I asked my brother Bill how he preserves his wine and he politely responded that leftover wine is not an issue at all for him ☺). By the way, we do sell cans of Wine Preserver in our tasting room for \$10.95. One can will give you over 140 uses.

A minor confession: One day, last year, we ran out of Nitrogen gas for our fermentation tanks. Not good. No Nitrogen means the oxygen will break down the wine. We found out our Nitrogen ran out on a Saturday, and the place we go to for gas refills was closed 'til Monday. The wine would have been affected by two days of exposure to oxygen. So my brother Bill had the brainstorm of emptying a bunch of cans of Wine Preserver on top of the wine in the tanks. Hey, it's better to blow through three cans per tank of the Wine Preserver versus exposing a

tank full of wine to oxygen. So I went into our tasting room, grabbed an armful off the shelf, and felt quite awkward spraying cans into large tanks. It worked! The wine was saved!! And that was the last time we used the cans for our tanks. We learned to refill the Nitrogen tanks before they get too low!

STORING TIPS

We briefly mentioned this in a recent newsletter, but it bears repeating because we hear this question a lot: How long can I age/store this wine? If you hear from some expert that this wine will age up to 8 years, or that wine up to 5 years, don't pay much attention. You can only tell how long a wine will age as that wine is aging. Everything else is speculation. But there are some general guidelines that help.

- 1. Drink white wines now:** Very few white wines age well (except for that \$100 bottle of Champagne). That is partly due to the lack of tannins that act as a preserving and softening agent in the wine. The tannins are mainly from the skins of the grape, and most white wines are fermented without the skins (skins pressed off before fermentation). So with white wines, enjoy now, but don't freak out if you have a bottle that has been on the shelf for an extended period of time. Just drink it and see.
- 2. Drink most reds now:** Very few reds (one expert estimated 5%) age well and get better over time. My guess is because there are many non-premium red wines that have saturated the market.
- 3. Don't waste space on storing cheap reds:** Life is too short to drink cheap wine, and your house is too small to store cheap reds, hoping that they just might get better with time. Most likely if you start with a mediocre wine, a few years of aging will yield you a mediocre wine that is two years old!
- 4. Age those precious reds carefully:** If you find a jewel that you just know will get better over time, then lay it down for a few years (on its side or upside-down so the cork won't dry out). So how do you find a jewel? Well, go to Wilson Creek of course ☺. But, how about a store? Well when I buy wines in a store, I find myself making an "informed guess" or may times an "uninformed guess." Know what I mean? There you are in the store looking at hundreds of bottles. Don't you feel a tad intimidated? What is good? What is not? What is a value? What is a rip-off? No one is there to help most of the time so you fend for yourself. Or you don't gamble on buying an unfamiliar wine, so you stick with the tried and true. Well that can get boring (like eating at the same restaurant over and over), so how do you find those jewels? You dig! Go online and read reviews, you ask around, or you track down the liquor manager of the store. But the best way to dig is to buy a variety of wines and try a handful over the next few weeks. I find that I will enjoy some good wines, but then that moment, the BAM! The night when you open a red, taste it, and just stand there speechless, frozen in time! WOW! BAM! What is THIS? You find yourself squeezing every last drop out of the bottle, wringing the bottle if you could. Now, go back to the store and buy some more bottles (or a case) and lay it down for a few years. If it ages well you have an even better wine. If it stays the same, you still have a great wine. It's like finding a good restaurant: you have to try some OK ones before you find a great one. Friends and reviews help, but nothing beats going there yourself. The same with wine.

