



Carol's Bunch

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Sea-Zins greetings to our loyal members of Carol's Bunch! We hope you are all well and safe from all of the insanity of both the political and weather climates. What we really need this upcoming holiday season is to regroup, to refill our souls and to savor our time with those we love over some great meals and happier times...and that means that we need to get this marvelous box of joyful libations into your eager paws early in the season, so we can make sure you have it in time for all of your feasts and celebrations. Let the festivities begin!

In this shipment you will find five new vintage releases and one reprise of a new favorite, plus the traditional tin of dark chocolates and an updated logo ball cap, one of our most popular "tchotchkes" in the tasting room. Make sure you do not miss those items, since they are small and could get lost in your gleeful opening of your box.

As for the wines in this shipment... it is a very exciting new batch! We made a tough choice to **NOT** include the usual bottle of **Wild Thing Zin**, in favor of a brand new wine that is also a bit lighter in body, the **2021 Grenache Noir**. The five-barrel lot that went into this stood out for its easy-drinking, sunny personality, and we thought it'd be a great match for so many of the holiday feasts that we pulled it out of the 2021 Coquille Rouge blend and bottled it on its own...only 149 cases produced so better hop on it if you want some more before it is gone! Another brand new wine in this box is the **Barbera d'Oakley**. We jumped at the chance to play with the fruit from these 130-year-old vines, growing at the edges of the Planchon Zinfandel vineyard in the tiny town of Oakley at the mouth of the Sacramento River in the "East Bay" of the Central Coast AVA. Barbera's ripe black cherry fruit is the core, complemented by spicy Zin and mellow Merlot, in a blend that speaks in such a smooth voice, it would make Barry White proud! Try this new wine with our winter Farro-Squash Salad on Page 4!

In the February shipment we released another new wine, the **2019 Wally Zin** and many club members said they missed it entirely...so we held back just enough of it so you all could have a second taste (or first if you just woke up?). It is from Rod "Wally" Wallstrum's vineyard in Alexander Valley, and it dances with lively raspberry tanginess, so fantastic with tamales and other family faves for the holidays. If you

decide you want some more of this one, grab FAST because once we complete this "reprise" offer, we will not have much of it left to sell you any extra bottles—say "Pretty Please" to Carolyn and Heather and they will see if they can squeeze some out for you.



New sorting line set up

For new releases of familiar wines, we have the **2019 Rockpile (Rocky) Reserve Zin**, our perennial flagship wine that has the elegant structure of Cabernet (with no Cab in it!) with Zin's rounder curves and rich berries. This vintage is a grand rendition of this Zin that has become a benchmark for the elevated style that Rockpile delivers. That is why we are changing the name from "Rocky" to "Rockpile Reserve," so

its origins are more clear to the uninitiated (non-Bunchers). Another long term favorite from the house of Shelton is the **2019 Monga Zin**, and this is the very best vintage to **ever** come out of these incredible 104-year-old, dry-farmed, organic bush vines! The low crop yielded amazingly concentrated flavors of Moroccan spices and dried cherry deliciousness, perfectly balanced with bright acidity so it stands up with intense foods or just a cheese tray in front of the fire. Yummm...

Last but ne'er least, we finish up the package with our usual, but the new vintage of the decadent **2021 Black Magic Late Harvest Zin**, our slightly sweet dessert jewel—enjoy it on its own, with the dark chocolates we gift you, or paired with a food that is LESS sweet than it is, so the two do not fight each other...think tiramisu or flourless chocolate cake.

WINERY NEWS!

Now for news of the winery and harvest...2022 was a totally WILD Crush season, my 46th harvest, and one for the books. In mid-April, there was a frost event all over northern California, from Sonoma County to the Sierra Foothills and even Lodi; we lost 100% of the Damiano Viognier crop in this serious and late frost, and it cut back the productivity of other vines closer to home here, leading to fewer and smaller clusters. We had no issues with fire or smoke at all, thank God, but we started harvest very early with Monga Zin coming in on August 1st, then a mid-September heat wave that was a real scorcher—over a week at temperatures over 114°F! Grapevines

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Here are the details on this box of deliciousness, listed in suggested tasting order! The total tab for this shipment is \$144.80, before any applicable tax & shipping.

2021 GRENACHE NOIR CENTRAL COAST



Grenache Noir is the only dark-skinned member of the Grenache family, which also includes green-skinned Grenache Blanc and mauve-skinned Grenache Gris—it is often just referred to as “Grenache” (or Garnacha in Spain), although that is sort of like just saying “Pinot” instead of Pinot Noir or Pinot Blanc/Gris. In any case, the variety is clearly color challenged, but it produces such lovely delicate red fruit that we can forgive that! Originally destined for the Coquille Rouge blend, this 5-barrel lot was selected because Carol was charmed by its easy-drinking vivacity—enjoy!

Double Gold/Best of Class, 96pts and Gold Medal, 94pts

90% Grenache Noir, 5% Petite Sirah, 2% each Carignane & Mourvèdre, 1% Alicante Bouschet

95% “Central Coast” (83% Oakley in SF Bay area, 12% Paso Robles)

7.5 months in barrel—all older, 80% French, 20% American

Case Production: 149 cases

Aging Potential: 5-7 years (best to drink sooner than later, as it requires no further age)

Price: \$27.00/ \$21.60 Club **First AND Last Grab!**

Carol’s Tasting Notes: The color is only a bit darker than our Rosé! The nose shows delightful ripe strawberry aromas and some peppery spice, along with a bit of black cherry fruit, and of savory leather notes in the background. Lighter-bodied in mouth, but super soft and creamy with a nice tangy finish. This would be fantastic with any lighter dishes like poultry or fish, or vegetarian meals, especially with lots of mushrooms! Also fantastic with turkey or ham and cranberry relish on your holiday table!

2021 BARBERA D’OAKLEY® PLANCHON VINEYARD, CONTRA COSTA CO.



The 130-year-old Planchon Vineyard in Oakley (where the Sacramento River meets SF Bay) is the source of this interesting “Italianate blend.” The wine’s name is a play on the famous “Barbera d’Asti” blend with Dolcetto, though in this case a Bordeaux variety (Merlot) adds structure and elegance to the straightforward black cherry and blackberry fruit of the Barbera grape, and the Old Vine Zin and Carignane chime in with their own bright raspberry and spice notes.

Not reviewed or judged yet, accolades yet to come...

75% Barbera, 10% Merlot, 10% Zinfandel, 5% Carignane

8 months in barrel—25% new Hungarian and 75% older French and American

Case Production: 236 cases

Aging potential: 7-10 years

Price: \$30.00 / \$24.00 Club **Premiere release!**

Carol’s Tasting Notes: Vibrant nose of tart black cherry and blackberry, with a kiss of green herbs and earth, black peppery spice and vanilla oak. Mouth shows some nice tart cherry and pomegranate, and mouthfeel is silky smooth, almost dangerous in how easy it is to drink. This wine would be delicious with tomato-sauced pastas, harder cheeses, and grilled things, especially portabello mushroom caps! *Buon appetito!*

2019 WALLY ZIN WALLSTRUM VINEYARD, ALEXANDER VALLEY



Rod Wallstrum, known as “Wally” to his many friends, was the Agriculture teacher at Healdsburg High School, and as such, is a fixture in the local ag community. His small Zin vineyard in Alexander Valley has yielded luscious fruit, full of spicy raspberry flavors and vibrant acidity.

“BEST ZIN!” Platinum Medal – 95pts, plus other 3 Gold – 90pt Medals

96% Zinfandel, 2% Alicante Bouschet, 2% Carignane – 95% Wallstrum Vineyard

18 months in barrel – 1/3 2nd fill American, 2/3 older French & American

Case Production: 247 cases **LAST GRAB!**

Aging potential: 5-10 years

Price: \$34.00 / \$27.20 Club

Carol’s Tasting Notes: Spicy-peppery black raspberry fruit, right off the top, with a bit of black cherry and dusty earth in background. Mouth offers creamy oak, vanilla and tart cherry, and a lighter-bodied middle, but pleasing fruit and spice throughout. Does it get a Gold Star for being the teacher’s pet?! Great with ham and yams...cranberry relish and turkey too.



2019 ROCKPILE (ROCKY) RESERVE® ZIN, FLORENCE VINEYARD, ROCKPILE

Our flagship wine, the very best Zin we produce every year. Carol was a co-founder of the Rockpile AVA with her grower, Jack Florence Sr., whose vineyard planted in 1997 at 1400 ft elevation is the star of the show. It lies above our summer morning fogs and has a much more even growing season, which allows for it to develop very polished tannins and Cabernet-like structure...our "Zin with the Heart of a Cab."

91pts Connoisseurs' Guide, 2 Double Golds (up to 97pts!) and 8 Gold Medals

80% Zinfandel, 15% Petite Sirah, 5% Carignane

95% Florence Vineyard, Rockpile AVA (all but the Carignane)

18 months in barrel – 1/3 new French & American, 1/3 2nd fill Hungarian+, 1/3 older French

Case Production: 581 cases

Aging potential: 7-20 years

Price: \$42.00/ \$33.60 Club **New release!**

Carol's Tasting Notes: Nice dark-red in color, big blueberry-blackberry fruit, spicy-chocolatey oak, nicely focused acidity enhances mineral flavors, elegantly structured tannins for aging, super plush looong finish! Fantastic with Rich Lasagna or a beautiful Prime Rib roast!



2019 MONGA ZIN® OLD VINE ZIN, CUCAMONGA VALLEY

The grapes for our beloved Monga Zin are becoming more difficult to obtain with each year of drought that we have here in CA—this ancient vineyard is literally at the western edge of the Mojave Desert, with absolutely no irrigation possible, which makes crop yield about 0.15 tons/acre, <10% of what we get from vineyards up north. Struggle is good, but sometimes we do not get ANY fruit at all. BTW, this is BEST vintage we have EVER produced from Lopez!

91pts Wine Enthusiast, plus 6 Gold Medals/ 95pts Best of Class

100% Zinfandel, Lopez Vineyard, Cucamonga—planted in 1918, dry-farmed & *Organically Grown*

20 months in 15% NEW American and 85% older American & French oak barrels

Case Production: 914 cases

Aging potential: 15-20 years

Price: \$28.00 / \$22.40 Club **New release!**

Carol's Tasting Notes: Deep black cherry fruit, dried cranberry, orange zest, like a berry patch in the sun! Dusty vanilla caramel oak, graham crackers and cocoa. Fragrant Moroccan spices or Chinese 5-spice. In the mouth it is super concentrated, with creamy yet tangy bright cherry fruit, long lush finish. Fantastic with heartier fare, but would be great with cranberry (we love cranberry here, can you tell?) relish and roasted anything...especially portabello mushrooms or eggplant parm.



2021 Black Magic LATE HARVEST ZINFANDEL DESSERT WINE

We had to include this perennial favorite sweetie to make sure you all had it for the holidays, along with our legendary 72% cacao chocolate morsels in a tin, the perfect complement for the chocolatey-raspberry goodness in this tiny bottle—it is an enchanting dessert all by itself!

Best of Show Dessert Wine, Double Gold and 2 Gold Medals

34.5° Brix at Harvest – **6.9% RS and 15.0% alc**

97% Late Harvest Zinfandel, 2% Alicante Bouschet and 1% Petite Sirah

100% Sonoma County: 70% Dry Creek Valley, 30% Fountaingrove District

Case Production: 785 half-cases produced, in 375ml bottles

Aging potential: 5-8 years, maybe more?

Price: \$20.00/ \$16.00 Club **New release!**

Carol's Tasting Notes: Mocha, cherry cordial, a whiff of Raisinettes, lovely chocolate syrup with a slight touch of mint chip, black pepper, and orange peel on the nose. In the mouth are explosions of dark chocolate and coffee, with gorgeous jammy black raspberry with a slightly chewy texture and well-balanced sweetness. Be sure to pair it with a dessert that is less sweet than the wine so they won't fight each other—try to use darker chocolate or cocoa, like a flourless mocha cake or tiramisu!

tend to “shut down” and go into survival mode after it hits about 93°F, so the vines were just barely treading water, so to speak, and most of my growers had NO water to give them, since they were coping with curtailments on water usage due to the severe drought. Zinfandel is hardy and especially the deep-rooted and dry-farmed older vines did fine, but the sugars did soar upwards quickly as desiccation set in, creating raisins. As it turned out, this “heat dome” was followed within a week by 3 days with a rare 3.5” of rain, which was actually helpful in “re-hydrating” some of the raisins and helping the vines recover from the heat and push through to maturity. Overall, like last year, we received a very much smaller crop across the board, by as much as 50% in some cases. Even the Wild Thing Zin was low in yield, so I had to bring in another vineyard or two to be sure we had enough fruit to make both the Wild Thing Rosé and its big brother Zin in the quantities needed to satisfy all of you thirsty Wild Thing drinkers! With the lower yields, the flavors are very intense and concentrated.

We were excited to have some new equipment in our cellar this year—four new open-top fermenters with cooling jackets and a conveyor belt “sorting table,” which allowed us to pull out more leaves, raisins and undesirables. We just keep moving up the bar on quality!

As most of you local folk know, we were able to re-open the tasting room on a limited basis by summer time this past year, although Carolyn had a tough time covering seven days a week. We have now hired a new Tasting Room/Marketing Associate, Heather Schultz, to cover weekends and a few weekdays as well. She is still getting accustomed to our wines and set up, but she is already boosting our social media posts and it won’t be long till she is pitching in on writing email blasts...and even this newsletter, God willing. We are excited to open up for this November’s Wine & Food affair for the Wine Road, taking place on Nov 5-6, as well as the Winter Wineland event in mid-January. Both events will be returning to their original free-flow walk-through event, versus the pre-reserved sit-down tastings we offered as we were starting to open up after Covid quarantines were lifted.

Since (your) inquiring minds want to know...plans for our new winery are crawling along, slowed even more when both of the structural engineering firms had to close for most of 2 months due to a big Covid outbreak among their staffs. We plan to submit everything for the actual Building Permit by the end of October. With delays abounding and costs of supplies (and loans!) soaring, we are looking at breaking ground in the Spring of 2023, hoping that costs will settle down by then. For those who might have missed the news, our total plan is to build a 50,000 sq ft winery with a beautiful new tasting room and patio, plus a rooftop event center, all to be built in the middle of the “Windsor Beverage District,” which is full of other wineries, breweries, a cidery, and even a distillery, and a stone’s throw from the new \$50 million facility of Russian River Brewing. The idea is to bring all of our wine production into one space at long last, and to offer all of you a fantastic hospitality center to boot. Our updated target date for completion is 2023/2024...we will keep you posted as things (hopefully) progress!

In this season of hope, we pray that humanity will soon awaken to a new world of understanding and compassion, bringing peace and

healing to the war-torn regions like Ukraine, homes and comfort to disaster-plagued regions like Pakistan, Nigeria and our own Florida, and sanity to the leaders of Russia, Iran, China and North Korea. No matter where you find yourselves for the holiday season, we want to wish you safe and wonderful times with loved family and friends, lots of your favorite foods, and of course plenty of delicious Carol Shelton wines! From our crew to yours, **Happy Holidays!**

Carol Shelton

RECIPE

Warm Winter Salad of Farro and Butternut Squash

As a side dish for holiday meals or as a “grain bowl” lunch on the day after, this is a flexible recipe that you can add to as much as you like—it goes great with our new Barbera d’Oakley, but any of our Zins or even the Wild Thing Rosé would work as well!

- 2 cups cooked farro (or any grain)
- 1 cup ½” cubes of butternut squash (pre-cut in produce)
- 1 T. Olive Oil
- Salt and pepper
- Thyme, ½ tsp fresh, chopped, or ¼ tsp dried
- 1 cup pecans, glazed if you like, halves or chopped, your choice
- 1 cup dried cherries or cranberries
- ½ cup fresh pomegranate arils
- 4 oz. goat cheese, crumbled—get it cold before you crumble it!
- 3 T. chopped fresh parsley

- Vinaigrette**—mix up in a jar or cruet:
- 3 T. Carol Shelton Barbera d’Oakley (or Zin or?)
 - 1 T. Maple Syrup (or honey)
 - 1 t. Dijon mustard (it keeps the emulsion from breaking)
 - 1 clove of roasted garlic, minced or paste (I buy it in a tube in the produce section)
 - ½ - ¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
 - ¼ tsp each salt and pepper
 - ⅓ cup good EVOO (extra virgin olive oil)

Cook the farro according to package instructions, being sure to salt the water and to drain it well after cooking. Drizzle 1 T. EVOO over it to keep it from clumping, if not ready to assemble salad immediately.

Toss the squash cubes with the olive oil, S&P and thyme, then roast on a sheet pan in a 425°F oven for about 25-30 min, till fork tender and a bit caramelized/browned.

If you are so inclined, you can “plump” the dried fruit in 1-2 T. of wine as well!

Toss the cooked farro, cooked butternut squash, nuts, dried fruit, and goat cheese together in a bowl with a few spoonfuls of the vinaigrette, topping with fresh parsley bits. Serve warm or chilled.

Leftovers are fantastic for lunch, as flavors will meld nicely overnight!

