



# CACHE CREEK

VINEYARDS & WINERY

DECEMBER 2022 | NEWSLETTER

## Q&A WITH WINEMAKER DEREK HOLSTEIN

– PART TWO –

In our September Wine Club newsletter, we shared the first part of our Q&A with our winemaker, Derek Holstein. Derek has been in integral part of our winery since our very first vintage in 2005, so we wanted you to get a closer look at the person who creates our award-winning wines.

Part II

*What are some of the changes you've seen during the course of your winemaking career, and how do you feel about these changes?*

When I first moved from Madera, CA to the Napa Valley (accepting a position as Enologist at Christian Brothers Winery) there were really only a few wineries in the Valley and most of them had been in business for many years. UC Davis was just beginning to feed winemakers into the industry as demand was beginning to increase for modern technology.

The use of barrels in California winemaking was brand new and Robert Mondavi Winery had just shocked the industry with a woman winemaker from UC Davis, Zelma Long, and a new winery in Oakville that was based around the use of stainless steel tanks and oak barrels made in France. Since that time, interested winemakers (such as myself) have developed methods to produce wines that were more appealing to consumers. This included things like oxygen control, filtration techniques, yeast and enzyme use, cap management in the fermenter, and bottle closures that maintained the fruitiness of white wines.

My personal philosophy has focused on expressing the uniqueness of each vineyard and creating an immediately appealing wine that will age for many years with proper storage. I choose oak barrels that will add tannin to enhance the texture, ageability and varietal flavor that is natural to the vineyard. I really enjoy hearing stories about wines that I made 25-plus years ago that have recently surprised and delighted someone who just tasted the wine for the first time. Luckily, my clients have the same values. However, at this time in our industry, it is possible to shape a given wine to taste somewhat like a different wine with the use of enzymes, oak flavors, additives that change the mouth feel, concentrated grape juice and various other extracts.



In an extremely competitive market where sometimes the main objective has become to make a fortune or fame (rather than good wine), there are wineries that have prioritized their focus on media attention and celebrity status. I was attracted to the agricultural aspect of grape growing and winemaking. I liked talking with and getting to know farmers who have personally worked their own land and have what might be thought of as a somewhat spiritual connection to their property. I favor natural things over artificial and don't like the idea of "fake." I realize though that as the industry has grown and developed, it has also divided somewhat and there

are winemakers who make wines in both categories. I just happen to value a more traditional style of winemaking which I like to think enhances the life experience of its consumer.

*Can you share with us any highlights from your career?*

I have done a lot of research over the years and constantly enjoy taking another look at things to see if I can learn something new. In the early part of my career, I was one of the only two winemakers (to my knowledge) who were studying oxygen control as a tool for wine development. I presented a study to the industry at the Unified Symposium in Sacramento with one of my professors from UC Davis and a chemist who performed the analysis for my work. The talk was very well attended and began a new branch of winemaking that is now standard.

Several of my peers at the time made jabs at me while I was doing the work — informing me that it was pointless and asking why I wasted my time worrying about oxygen. One of those winemakers — who went to Australia to become a prominent winemaker — told me years later that he and another winemaker used to throw away the memos that I wrote to the winemaking staff explaining the work as I went along without looking at them much. Then he added that he really wished that he had kept them now. High quality wine from mobile bottling lines would not be possible without oxygen control.

I've had several incidents when people have told me how wonderful this or that wine was that they had tried many years

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## DECEMBER WINE CLUB SHIPMENT

Our goal is to offer something for everyone, so we have many choices for our club members. Because of this, the wines listed as a part of the December club shipments might not be the exact ones you received. However, if you read about a wine on the shipment list and didn't receive it, we are happy to send you additional wines at your club discount price. The price listed after the wine is the full retail price, not the Wine Club members price.



### 2018 CELEBRATION CUVÉE BLANC DE BLANC SPARKLING WINE

*Gold Medal • Two Silver Medals*

Endless tiny bubbles and a nose of brioche, lemon and Asian pear tempt that first sip—which hooks you completely. The lively entry exposes delicious green apple, white peach and lemon zest fused with hints of freshly ground ginger. As the mouthwatering, creamy essence fills the palate, traces of pineapple and toasty yeast appear, adding dimension and depth to this seductive sparkling wine. \$40

### 2020 RESERVE SAUVIGNON BLANC

Seductive oak wrapped in white floral and lemon-lime zest greets the nose and entices you to sip. The silken entry flows into a mid-palate filled with bright, luscious citrus—pomelo, fresh lemon, tangerine and key lime. Traces of green apple and white peach, along with a creamy vanillin essence, lend a richness and balance to the wine. Each sip is refreshingly rewarding, leaving the palate with clean, lingering flavors. \$35

### 2021 CHARDONNAY *Club Pre-Release*

The inviting aromas and plush flavors offer up a blend of tropical fruit, Asian pear, lime zest and Meyer lemon crème brûlée. On the palate, discover the perfect balance of a smooth, creamy mouthfeel playing against lively acidity. As the wine opens, traces of cinnamon and lychee appear and linger with the luscious flavors in the finish. \$26

### 2020 RESERVE CHARDONNAY

*Two Gold Medals • 90 points*

This perfectly composed wine offers everything we love about Chardonnay. The enticing nose is layered with aromas of lemon zest, mandarin, white floral, butterscotch, and a mineral essence. The velvety entry exposes luscious flavors of lemon custard, tangelo and caramel with a dusting of autumn spices. Traces of pineapple and tropical fruit appear mid-palate along with subtle acidity to balance the opulent flavors. Hints of toasty oak and citrus zest emerge in the long, expansive finish. \$35

### 2020 ROSÉ OF CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Perfumey aromatics of fresh cherry, Crenshaw melon and juicy strawberry are laced with the enticing scent of a spring orchard in bloom. A smooth, richly textured entry offers delicious flavors of Maraschino cherry, pear and watermelon. As the wine flows into the long finish, traces of raspberry join the layers of cherry that expand and linger. \$22

### 2018 MALBEC *Wine Club Only Wine*

*Best of Class (twice) • Two Gold Medals • 95 points • 92 points*

Through the aromas of toasty oak discover layers of ripe red and black fruit, dried herbs, violets, and blackberry tart. The first sip wows you with robust, delicious flavors, and it just gets better from there. On the palate, a blueberry, blackberry and cherry core is laced with traces of forest floor, sweet

tobacco, vanilla, and fine dried herbs. As the wine opens, dark plum, pomegranate, cassis, mocha, and autumn spices join the core flavors. Medium-grained tannins and toasty oak provide a muscular structure to this distinctive and delicious wine. \$35



SPRING  
WINE CLUB  
PICKUP PARTY

Sunday,  
March 5, 2023

DECEMBER WINE CLUB SHIPMENT *Continued ...*

**2019 MAJESTIC ELK**

*Two Gold Medals • 93 points*

Alluring aromatics of sweet vine-ripened berries—black raspberry, strawberry and blueberry—are laced with mocha and toasty oak. The palate offers rich, balanced flavors of blackberry, Morello cherry, and black and red currant threaded with creamy coffee and traces of cedar and orange zest. The structure stays a step back, never interfering with the luscious flavors yet adding depth and lending just the right support. \$55

**2019 RESERVE CABERNET SAUVIGNON** *Club Pre-Release*

*Best of Class • Best of Lake County • Double Gold Medal • 98 points • Gold Medal • 93 points*

This Cab's charm starts with an expansive nose and carries through to a long mocha-laced finish. Aromas of mulberry and black currant mingle with hints of earthy mint and forest floor. The creamy mouthfeel is subtly infused with spicy cedar notes that enrich the stylish flavors. Wild blackberry, cherry, mulberry and cassis merge with Dutch cocoa and hints of eucalyptus, tarragon and thyme. The solid structure remains in the background, supporting the complex, rich flavors without interfering with the beauty and elegance of this enchanting wine. \$60

**2018 PETIT VERDOT**

*Silver Medal*

Subtle aromas of loamy earth and a rich mineral essence join an intense blend of dark ripe berries that fills the nose. A smooth entry reveals layers of black cherry, boysenberry and cassis wrapped with traces of coffee, violet, chocolate, licorice and juniper. Buoyant acidity bathes the palate while vanillin oak gently supports, but never overpowers, the dense, luscious lingering flavors. \$35

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**THE PERFECT PAIRING**

**DUNGENESS CRAB SALAD SANDWICH WITH  
MEYER LEMON MAYO**

- 1 Meyer lemon
- 1 egg
- ½ t. salt
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 t. Dijon mustard
- ½ c. olive oil
- ½ c. canola oil
- 2 c. Dungeness crabmeat (meat from 1 whole crab)
- 4 small hard rolls, cut in half crosswise
- 1 bunch watercress, cleaned and stemmed

Zest the peel from the lemon (you should have about 1¼ teaspoons) and set it aside. Cut the lemon in half and squeeze 2 tablespoons juice into a blender jar. Set aside the remaining half lemon.

Add the egg, salt, cayenne pepper and Dijon mustard to the blender jar. Blend to combine.



With the blender running, slowly add the oils in a thin stream until all the oil is incorporated and the mayonnaise is thick. Turn off the blender. Stir the reserved grated lemon zest into the mayonnaise.

In a small bowl, spoon one-fourth cup mayonnaise onto the crabmeat. Toss until the crab is coated with dressing.

Lightly spread each roll with mayonnaise. (You will have about half the mayonnaise, one-half cup, remaining. Save it for another use.) Spoon the crab salad onto the bottom halves of the rolls and squeeze a little juice from the remaining half lemon over each. Top the crab salad with watercress leaves and the upper halves of the rolls to make sandwiches.



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after I made it. Recently I was talking about Lake County and wines with a couple at an event. One of them mentioned that they had recently opened a 3-liter bottle (Jeroboam) of a Lake County Guenoc Cabernet Sauvignon at a party and the wine was so good that they never opened another wine that night and no one left until every last drop was consumed. I was internally smiling because I had made that wine in 1989, and we had received many awards for Cabernet during the time I was there. I was proud to be able to tell them that I just happened to be the winemaker there during that time and was especially happy that they had had no idea of that before telling me how much they enjoyed the wine.

Another wonderful time for me was when a former cellar worker, who I had trained (among many others) about 15 years before while I was winemaker at Trinchero Winery, came up to me at the Unified Symposium and said, "I'm so glad to see you because I just want to thank you for generously teaching me everything you did. Since then, I have become the winemaker for a winery in Oregon and I couldn't have done it if I hadn't learned from you."

*You mentioned you were a musician, and your musical background has influenced how you approach winemaking. Is that still the case, and if so, can you please elaborate on how it does?*

Indirectly of course, music and wine are alike in that they are at best an art form. Music — to be played well — requires skill and a unique perspective of what the composer intended. It must be presented in a way that the listener can hear the intention of the performer and the composer. It is performing art. Winemaking is not a performing art but it is a consumable art. The winemaker must also have a unique perspective that shines through the product and the consumer at best must be able to perceive this through the varietal (or blended) expression and the complexity that the winemaker was able to protect while developing the wine.

*What is the most memorable wine(s) you've tasted?*

There are many wines that I have appreciated over the years. Mostly they are other people's wines because, as with ones' children, it is hard to be objective about my own wines. I have to say though that my experience of memorable/pleasurable wines really depends upon the experience and the people present. I can have the same wine in a different setting or with a different person for example and the wines will give me a different experience/memory. It can even taste a bit different.

For example, I can remember once being really surprised by a wine that I had made while tasting it in Chicago. I was with a group of sales people and we had been releasing a new vintage of Trinchero Napa Valley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon in the area for several days. I had been carted around from one restaurant or

retail account to another in this process and I was exhausted. We culminated that week at Morton's Steak House where the wine was new on the wine list. One of the sales people challenged me to eat the 32oz. Porterhouse steak (I was about 40 years old at the time). I accepted the challenge and was poured a glass of the Cabernet to accompany the food. I had been tasting the wine with potential customers all week so the wine wasn't new but for some reason I still can't explain exactly, it tasted so amazing with the steak. The richness of the meat brought out the butteriness of the oak in the wine. We were celebrating an excellent week of sales, and I was with people I knew pretty well by now, and the wine and steak were the perfect companions. The wine never tasted as good before or probably since then. I can remember the sensation of the steak and good feelings of the event and harmonious feeling for the evening.

*Please tell us something about your life that might surprise us.*

I've always been quietly competitive. I didn't participate in team sports much because I didn't want to stand out in a crowd, but I did break a couple of league records in cross country and was Captain of the varsity and cross-country running teams in high school for two years. I ran the mile in four minutes 20 seconds and the quarter mile in 53 seconds. The longest I ever ran was 32 miles from Oakland to Mount Diablo.

*When not making wine, how do you enjoy spending your time?*

I stay pretty active: I hike in local places like Mount Tamalpais, work out at the local fitness center, play lots of piano, like to cook and have friends over for dinner, read books about classical musicians and composers, and play dominos with friends and family. I usually have some kind of project going — whether it's a new piano piece, gardening, or making something with wood or trying out a new recipe. I'm pretty easily self-motivated.

*Is there something you still want to do, either with your career or on a personal level?*

Since the pandemic started, I've been playing a lot more classical piano and have delved deeply into some very complex music. The more I work in that area, the more interested I become. I'm not sure where it is leading me but I think I would like to connect with some other musicians and work on some chamber music. Other than that, I would like to spend a bit more time traveling. I am looking forward to visiting my son in New Mexico a few more times and maybe some friends along the way, and my daughter in Germany.

We hope you've enjoyed getting to know Derek a little better, and you'll continue to enjoy the award-winning Cache Creek wines he creates.