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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS

Summer Travel Special



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Through San
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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Scrabble Success on a Winery Terrace

By Robert Johnson

I'm going to keep this month's column short because I want the picture of the Scrabble board to be big.

I've made my living as a writer and an editor for close to 40 years now. I landed my first newspaper job at age 16, and while I wasn't exactly making a living at that time, I was gaining valuable experience that would serve me well in the years to come.

I like to think that I'm pretty good at what I do — which is important, since I don't do much of anything else well. Yet when it comes to Scrabble, I lose regularly to friends in professions that have absolutely nothing to do with words.

So when I actually won a game a few weeks ago, it was cause for celebration. And when I managed to earn 50 bonus points with a seven-letter word, it was cause for a photo.

Why am I sharing my Scrabble adventures and misadventures in a wine club newsletter? Two reasons:

1. Check out the three-letter word



just above STINGERS. Yes, zinfandel fans, that one was mine, too.

2. The game took place on the terrace of Villa San-Juliette in San Miguel, Calif. — a winery that we've featured several times here at Vinesse, and is depicted on this issue's cover..

If you're planning a wine country vacation or weekend getaway this summer, bring along your Scrabble board... or some other game, if you prefer. Most wineries are more than happy to have you stick around for a while... especially if you're drinking a glass or two of their wine.



The 8 Regions Where Zinfandel Shines

Zinfandel has been planted in virtually all the grape-growing areas of California, in the widest possible variety of soils and topography, and in climates from coldest to hottest.

After more than a century of experimentation, eight regions have emerged as predominant sites for the varietal. We'll explore four this month and four next month...

• **Bay Area** — This is a radically diverse area, both in its geography and proximity to the ocean, creating a variety of microclimates. It includes the Livermore Valley and Contra Costa County to the east of San Francisco, and the Santa Cruz Mountains and Santa Clara Valley to the south.

• **Central Coast** — The Central Coast Region includes the Zinfandel growing areas of Monterey County, San Luis Obispo County (including Paso Robles), Edna Valley and Santa Barbara. Each of these areas contains vineyards that share the effects of coastal breezes, which moderate the warmth of the summer and early fall. Most of the soil is rocky and gravelly. Zinfandel was planted in the Central Coast by the mid-1880s, and the region has a long history of winemaking, dating back to the advent of the missionaries in the 18th century.



• **Lodi** — The Lodi appellation has a classic Mediterranean climate featuring warm days and cool evenings. It's situated directly east of San Francisco Bay at the edge of the Sacramento River Delta, where cool "delta breezes" provide reliable natural "air conditioning" throughout the growing season. The climate allows Lodi growers to consistently produce delicious, full-flavored wines that contain a refreshing natural acidity. Historically, Lodi vineyards were developed in the fine sandy loam soils surrounding the community of Lodi. It's there, along the banks of the Mokelumne River, where the majority of Lodi's century-old, own-rooted Zinfandel vineyards lie.

• **Central Valley** — This American Viticultural Area stretches from Colusa County in the north to Madera County in the south, and includes Clarksburg, Diablo Grande, Dunnigan Hills, Green Valley, Lodi, Madera, Meritt Island, River Junction, Salado Creek, Seiad Valley, Solano County and Suisun Valley.

— *Zinfandel Advocates & Producers*



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A New York 'Vinifera' Pioneer Is Still Going Strong After 56 Years

In France, Italy and Germany, it's not unusual to encounter wineries that have been owned and operated by the same family for generations.

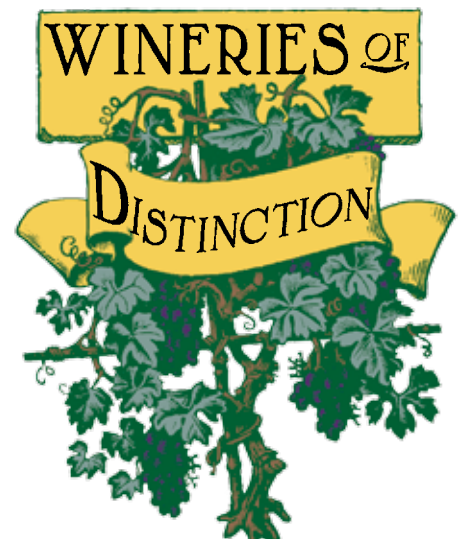
Multi-generational wineries are not so common in the United States, partly because America is a relatively young country, and partly because Prohibition forced so many wine families of the early 20th century to seek out other ways to make a living.

But on the west side of Keuka Lake in New York's Finger Lakes region, three generations of the Frank family — with a fourth waiting in the wings — have carved out a unique niche.

It all began in 1958 when Dr. Konstantin Frank ignored conventional wisdom of the time and planted vinifera grape varieties. Established grape growers and winemakers scoffed at Dr. Frank's belief that traditional European varieties could be grown successfully in the region's harsh, often bitter cold winters. Up until then, the native Labrusca variety was commonly grown, as were various French-American hybrids that had been developed for the area.

Dr. Frank firmly believed that

vinifera grapes could fare well, and experimented with varieties, clones and sites. In the years to come, he would prove the naysayers wrong. Through trial and error, toil and sweat, the Frank family found that northern European varieties, in particular, shine in the region. Riesling, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Noir have been stalwarts, and more recently,





Gruener Veltliner has been grown with great success.

Dr. Frank introduced his first wines in 1962, and they have been consistent award winners ever since. His legacy will be the ignition of the “vinifera revolution” in the Finger Lakes region, resulting in more than 100 area wineries producing vinifera wines today.

In the mid-1980s, Dr. Frank’s son, Willy, made history of his own when he introduced high-quality sparkling wine to the region. Frank believed that the labor-intensive *methode champenoise* was the only way to make sparkling wine, and that the classic Champagne grape varieties should be utilized.

His Chateau Frank sparkling wines quickly gained widespread acclaim, and today are considered among the best made in the state of New York.

In 1993, Willy Frank’s son, Fred, took over leadership of the family winery. With established lines of popular table and sparkling wines enjoying a loyal audience, Fred decided to develop a value-focused label: Salmon Run. It includes both single-variety wines and blends, and has helped introduce many more people to the wines of Dr. Konstantin Frank.

The increase in production necessitated an expansion of the winemaking team. Today, that team includes talented winemakers from New York, California, Australia and Germany, each of whom brings a unique skill set to the cellar.

The vineyards planted by Dr. Frank back in 1958 are now considered “old vine,” and produce grapes of exceptional quality and concentration — a key to crafting complex, top-quality wines.

And you can expect the Dr. Konstantin Frank, Chateau Frank and Salmon Run labels to be around for many vintages to come as Fred Frank’s daughter, Meaghan, recently joined the family business after receiving a Master’s degree in Wine Business from the University of Adelaide in Australia.

Winery 4-1-1

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Where to Dine After a Day of SLO Wining



Edna Valley Viticultural Area

About halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, San Luis Obispo wine country unfolds along the seafloor side of the Santa Lucia mountain range in San Luis Obispo County.

Adjoining American Viticultural Areas are Edna Valley and Arroyo Grande Valley, and the average distance between the wineries and the Pacific Ocean is just five miles — a true maritime climate, and one of California’s coolest for wine grape growing.

Most of the tasting rooms have a laid-back vibe, with stunning scenery against a blue-sky backdrop. And once you’re done tasting wine, a number of exceptional restaurants beckon for a wind-down dinner. Here are nine of our favorites...

■ **Alex Madonna’s Gold Rush Steak House** — Renowned for its outstanding menu and spectacular pink and gold décor, this award-winning restaurant features amazing oak pit-barbecued steak, fresh seafood, vegetarian entrees, a superb wine list, decadent desserts and nightly entertainment. Its Silver Bar offers cocktails, wine, beer and appetizers. 805-543-3000.

■ **Big Sky Café** — Featured in a *Wall Street Journal* story on where to eat in San Luis Obispo, this casual and contemporary downtown eatery features fresh market cuisine and 20 local wines by the glass. Organic products, fresh seafood and many vegetarian choices are included on the eclectic international menu. 805-545-5401.



Café Roma

■ **Café Roma** — A quintessential Central Coast experience. From its classic Italian dining room to its covered patio and casual bar, you’ll be transported to Italy when you walk through the doors. Its classic seasonal



TOURING TIPS

menu is complemented by more than 200 Italian and local wines. 805-541-6800.

■ **Lido Restaurant & Lounge at Dolphin Bay** — Enjoy stunning ocean views and farm-to-table cuisine, expertly paired with fine local wines. If you’ve been wine touring all day, two bottles may be brought in and opened with no corkage fee. Locals enjoy the weekday sunset happy hour, as well as the exceptional weekend Champagne brunch. 805-773-8900.

■ **Luna Red** — Located at the Mission de Tolosa in the heart of San Luis Obispo, this restaurant serves innovative, globally inspired cuisine sourced from local growers and purveyors. It also offers a wide

selection of local and international wines, and features live music on select nights. 805-540-5243.



Novo

■ **Novo** — Set against a rich, eclectic backdrop, Novo's international flavors are the leading ingredients in an exotic dining experience. Located in an historic downtown building with spectacular creek-side dining, it's a favorite with locals and tourists alike. It features an extensive global and local wine list, and has a downstairs "cellar room" for private parties or large groups. 805-543-3986.



Rooster Creek Tavern

■ **Rooster Creek Tavern** — Creative appetizers, main-course dishes such as Cane Rum Cured Salmon and wood-fired artisan pizzas are just part of the culinary allure of this restaurant in the village of Arroyo Grande. The wine list is extensive, spotlighting numerous local estates. 805-489-2509.



Splash Café

■ **Splash Café & Artisan Bakery** — We can think of three reasons to frequent this charming café: 1. for a bowl of clam chowder as a prelude to a fresh seafood entrée; 2. for an amazing breakfast pastry, baked fresh daily; 3. for a box lunch to accompany a wine country picnic. 805-544-7567.



Windows on the Water

■ **Windows on the Water** — The menu changes with the seasons at this fine-dining restaurant overlooking Morro Bay and Morro Rock. Local sources are used for fresh fish, vegetables, fruit, herbs, livestock and seafood, and the award-winning menu is accompanied by a thoughtfully selected wine list. 805-772-0677.

VINESSE

Hot LIST

1 Hot Wine Event. Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is Sonoma County's signature charity event, bringing together more than 200 of Sonoma's top winemakers and growers, along with the area's best chefs. It's jointly produced by the Sonoma County Vintners and the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Foundation, and all proceeds benefit local charities. Since its inception, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend has raised more than \$12 million for charities that benefit students, children, farm workers and people in need in Sonoma communities. Francis Ford Coppola Winery, MacMurray Estate Vineyards and Chateau St. Jean are the main event hosts, Aug. 29-31. <http://sonomawinecountryweekend.com>

2 Hot Wine Cruise. ZAP (Zinfandel Advocates and Producers) has planned a cruise from Lisbon to London, with stops in Spain and France's Bordeaux region along the way. On-board private wine tastings will help pass the time between ports of call. The cruise is called "Masters of Zin," and is set for May 30-June 6, 2015. <http://www.zinfandel.org/default.asp?n1=10&n2=1291>

3 Hot O.C. Winery. Yes, there's a winery in Orange County, Calif. — specifically, in San Juan Capistrano. It's called Hamilton Oaks Vineyard and Winery, and in addition to wine tasting, concerts and parties, the property features something rarely seen in Orange County anymore: orange trees. <http://www.hamiltonoakssanjuan.com>



Quintessa. A Napa Valley winery accessed from the Silverado Trail.

Rosé. A pink- or salmon-colored wine made from red wine grapes that are fermented with little or no contact with the grape skins (where the color comes from). When chilled, ideal for summertime sipping.

Shiraz. Synonym for Syrah, most commonly used in Australia and South Africa.

Tuscany. A major wine region of Italy, and home to Brunello di Montalcino, Chianti and other types of wine.

Unctuous. Word often used to describe a wine with a rich aroma and a rich, thick mouthfeel.

Vintage. Year shown on a wine bottle designating the year in which the given wine's grapes were harvested.

VINESSE STYLE



California's climate is similar to that of the Mediterranean, and perfectly suited for growing olives.

Lot, hot, dry summers promote growth of olives with optimal oil and antioxidants that are believed to enhance health and longevity.

Numerous olive varieties are grown in California, the most prominent being Manzanillo, Sevillano, Mission, Ascolano, Frantoio and Arbequina. Harvesting at varying degrees of ripeness captures a wide array of flavors.

This means California's artisan growers are able to create a bounty of diverse, extraordinary Extra Virgin Olive Oils that cover an incredible spectrum of flavor possibilities — an olive oil for every palate and culinary use.

We Olive opened its first store in 2003 to create a place for these

artisan growers to market their products. Now, it is California's premier olive tasting bar and retailer, offering olive oils from more than 20 producers at eight locations throughout the state.

Tasting an olive oil is the best way to be sure it's what you like —and what you'd like to share with others. We Olive provides a place where people can enjoy the full spectrum of the finest olives, olive oils, other foods and gifts that the Golden State has to offer.

If you're planning a trip to San Luis Obispo wine country (see "Wine Touring Tips" in this issue), note that there is a We Olive shop in San Luis Obispo at 958 Higuera Street.

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APPELLATION SHOWCASE



Bell Mountain, Texas

T*exas is the site of the first vineyard established in North America by Franciscan priests, circa 1662. As European settlers followed the development of mission outposts, they brought more grapevine cuttings, further developing the industry through the 1800s.*

Today, Texas has approximately 4,400 acres of producing vineyard farmland. The U.S. Department of Treasury, through the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, officially designates American Viticultural Areas, or AVAs. Texas has eight AVAs, although many vineyards exist outside the specified AVAs.

The Bell Mountain viticultural area is located in Gillespie County, Texas. This AVA is entirely contained within the Hill Country AVA and covers approximately 3,200 acres on the south and southwestern slopes of Bell Mountain in northeast Gillespie County.

Bell Mountain was the first designated AVA in Texas, established in November 1986. This area is on the southwest slopes of Bell Mountain, and elevations range from 505 meters to approximately 596 meters. The areas of highest elevation are located in the northern parts of the AVA, with some areas of high elevations in the south.

The central part of the AVA forms a valley between the areas of high

elevation in the north and south. Several tributaries of the Colorado River, including the Llano and Pedernales rivers, cross the region west to east and join the Colorado as it cuts across the region to the southeast. These rivers drain to a large portion of the Hill Country, thus having a tremendous effect on drainage in the region. The Guadalupe, San Antonio, Frio, and Nueces rivers originate in the Hill Country.

The region is dominated by two soil associations, Luckenbach-Pedernales-Heaton and Nebgen-Campair-Hye, with the latter covering over 50% of the AVA.

The macroclimate is influenced by the effects of the entire Texas Hill Country. Annual precipitation values within the boundaries of the region ranged from 85 to 91-cm, with the most precipitation experienced during the month of September. The minimum temperatures are dominated by high diurnal variation in the winter months and more steady temperatures throughout the summer.



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Q It has been a pretty hot summer where we live, so we like to enjoy a glass of wine out on our porch. But I've noticed that red wines seem to taste bitter when we drink them outside. Why would this be?

A There probably are a few factors. First, red wines in general are higher in alcohol than white wines, and alcohol can cause a "hot" or "bitter" impression on the palate. The same goes for tannin, which also is more present in red wines.

And hot weather can magnify the sensation. Until the temperatures come back down, you may want to consider drinking white wine, or giving your red wine a quick chill. Probably the best red wine choice during the summer months is Sangiovese, which is high in acid, providing a refreshing tartness. And while wine snobs may scoff at the idea, there's no law against adding an ice cube to a glass of wine — regardless of its hue.



474

Number of bonded wineries in California in 1940. As of 2012, that number had increased to 3,754.

(Source: Wine Institute)

“ I hover over the expensive Scotch and then the Armagnac, but finally settle on a glass of rich red claret. I put it near my nose and nearly pass out. It smells of old houses and aged wood and dark secrets, but also of hard, hot sunshine through ancient shutters and long, wicked afternoons in a four-poster bed. It's not a wine, it's a life, right there in the glass. ”



— From *The Gone-Away World*, by Nick Harkaway

Reality television obviously has had an influence on the organizers of the 4th annual Hawaii Food & Wine Festival, scheduled for September 4-7 on the island of Oahu. One of the planned events is the “Halekulani Master Chefs Gala Series,” which will see “six of the world's finest executive chefs compete in a lavish six-course plate-up.” Also planned is a “Battle of the Brunch Showdown.” For festival information, visit hawaiifoodandwinefestival.com.

Where Mulholland Drive ends, the new American Viticultural Area known as Malibu Coast begins. The AVA includes parts of Los Angeles and Ventura counties, extending north to the bedroom community of Thousand Oaks. It covers 44,590 acres over the Santa Monica Mountains, and presently is home to 52 commercial wineries. That number is not likely to increase anytime soon, by the way. Because of the California drought, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has approved a proposal that would ban the development of additional wineries in the county.



Respected voices in research joined forces with industry names synonymous with pioneering organic winegrowing to provide comprehensive insight on the details of organic and sustainable farming at the 2014 Organic Winegrowing Conference. The event was held on July 29 at the Inglenook winery in Rutherford, Calif., and was organized by the Napa Valley Grapegrowers organization. More and more wineries are embracing organic and sustainable winegrowing practices, and the conference provided an excellent networking opportunity, plus a detailed look at dry farming.



FOOD & WINE PAIRINGS



Santa Maria-Style Barbecue

The roots of Santa Maria-style barbecue date back to the mid-1800s, when massive ranches occupied the hills of California's Santa Maria Valley.

Local ranchers regularly fed their ranch hands by barbecuing meat over earthen pits filled with oak wood coals. According to one source, "The Santa Maria barbecue grew out of this tradition, and achieved its 'style' when local residents began to string cuts of beef on skewers or rods, and cook the meat over the hot coals of a red oak fire."

In 1931, the Santa Maria Club introduced a "Stag Barbecue," held on the second Wednesday of each month, with up to 700 patrons attending. Over the years, the legend of the Santa Maria-style barbecue grew, transforming a local treasure into a major attraction.

The signature cuts for Santa Maria-style barbecue are top block sirloin and the triangular-shaped bottom sirloin known as "tri-tip," a cut that originated in the Santa Maria Valley. The meat is rolled in a mixture of salt, pepper and garlic salt just prior to cooking. The red oak, a species of oak native to the region, contributes a hearty, smoky flavor.

Once the meat is trimmed and sliced, the only condiment needed is fresh salsa. The traditional menu

also includes French bread dipped in sweet melted butter, tossed green salad and slow-cooked pinto beans (see recipe in this issue). The pinto is a small pink bean grown exclusively in the Santa Maria Valley.

Today, Santa Maria-style barbecue is enjoyed across the region at restaurants, events and celebrations, the barbecue pits often staffed by members of local service organizations conducting fundraisers.

A favorite restaurant among locals is Jocko's in Nipomo, a town just north of Santa Maria. There, the oak-cooked meats are served in large cuts, and the well-selected wine list offers three types of red wine to accompany the beef dishes: Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Zinfandel.

When concentrating on just the meat, we opt for Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinot Noir. When inhaling an entire Santa Maria-style barbecue meal — complete with pinto beans — Zinfandel makes an excellent choice.

Other wines that match nicely with this style of sauceless barbecue are Chianti (Sangiovese), Syrah and Bordeaux-style red blends.

Four Seasons



WINES THAT MATCH THE SEASON

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PENNE PASTA WITH CHICKEN AND ASPARAGUS

Asparagus is notoriously challenging to match with wine, but one variety that works reliably well is Sauvignon Blanc. Try it with this dish, and see how the herbal character of the wine complements the assertive flavor of the asparagus. This recipe yields 8 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 (16-oz.) package dried penne pasta
- 5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut into cubes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Garlic powder to taste
- 1/2-cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 bunch slender asparagus spears, trimmed, cut on diagonal into 1-inch pieces
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
- 1/4-cup Parmesan cheese

Preparation

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to boil. Add pasta, and cook until al dente (about 8 to 10 minutes). Drain, and set aside.
2. Warm 3 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Stir in chicken, and season with salt, pepper and garlic powder.
3. Cook until chicken is cooked through and browned (about 5 minutes). Remove chicken to paper towels.
4. Pour chicken broth into the skillet. Then stir in asparagus, garlic, and a pinch more garlic powder, salt and pepper.
5. Cover, and steam until asparagus is just tender (about 5 to 10 minutes). Return chicken to skillet, and warm through.

6. Stir chicken mixture into pasta, and mix well. Let sit about 5 minutes.
7. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons olive oil, stir again, then sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

SANTA MARIA STYLE PINQUITO BEANS

This is a popular side dish for grilled tri-tip steak. Serve family-style with Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. Pinto beans
- 1 strip diced bacon
- 1/2-cup diced ham
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 3/4-cup tomato puree
- 1/4-cup red chili sauce
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. dry mustard

Ingredients

1. Cover beans with water and let soak overnight in a large container.
2. Drain, cover with fresh water, and simmer 2 hours or until tender.
3. Sauté bacon and ham until lightly browned. Add garlic, sauté a minute or two longer, then add tomato puree, chili sauce, sugar, mustard and salt.
4. Drain most of liquid off beans and stir in sauce. Keep hot over low heat until ready to serve.

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