

WILLIAMS SELYEM

SPRING 2022 RELEASE

A Note from VP of Winemaking Jeff Mangahas

Burt and Ed released the first commercial wine for Williams Selyem in 1981, and for the last 41 vintages a new chapter has been written with the stories of each growing season and the wines produced. Often, it's the "easy" vintages, like 2014, that make headlines for great wine with cooperative weather and an evenly paced harvest. However, it's the challenging vintages that I revere the most, as one's mettle is really put to the test. I fondly remember a story that Burt recounted to me once of a cold, wet vintage in the late 1980s, when the Rochioli Pinot Noir had to be painstakingly and meticulously sorted above and beyond an already exhaustive technique. The effort taken that year endeared him to that wine as much, or even more so, than the monumental 1985 Rochioli California State Fair Sweepstakes winner that subsequently became engrained in our winery's story as pivotal for putting Williams Selyem wines on a global radar.

2020 in Review

2020 is the latest chapter. The growing season began with abundant sunshine and dry soil conditions due to below average rainfall. As the season progressed, the weather continued to stay warm, and the phenology of the vines progressed at a fast rate with a high potential for quality wines, owing to excellent tannin development and deep color.

The Walbridge Fire

Leading up to the start of harvest was a hot spell. This weather event accelerated maturity, and I decided to start picking on August 12 in haste. Due to the inherent fragility of Pinot Noir grapes, I knew the imminent heat wave could be detrimental. Almost simultaneously, a dry lightning storm came through Northern California. On August 17, due to the hot, dry conditions and high fuel loads, a series of wildfires ignited. What became known as the Walbridge Fire, in the hills near the coast, had a considerable impact on the rest of our harvest. With a significant amount of grapes picked in a five days' time leading up to the start of the fire, the concerns and fears of smoke taint started to set in. Smoke settled in stages in the interior valleys, which was an important factor in my consideration of what fruit was at risk.

Keep in mind, Westside Road was closed for a period of time when the direction of the fire started to come towards Guerneville and Healdsburg! During these closures, I was forced to quickly redirect fruit to nearby wineries to process our grapes, just to get the grapes safely off the vine and mitigate the risk of loss or damage.

The Science Behind Smoke Taint

Smoke can have a negative impact on grapes. While fruit is still on the vine the plants can absorb and sequester smoke volatiles that can later become part of the architecture of the wine during fermentation and aging. Surprisingly, as an industry, the science is not well understood. Most of the smoke taint compounds in wine have been identified so we can test for potential contamination, but even with this knowledge the picture is not completely clear.

For example, smoke-related compounds have been found in picked grapes from smoke-free years, yet we do not know enough about 'why'. Furthermore, some grape varieties have naturally occurring levels of taint-related compounds that exist even when they have not been exposed. To further complicate matters, some of the smoke-related compounds are present in toasted oak barrels! Thus, clouding one's interpretation of the data. An understanding of the chemistry (thankfully my background is in this type of science!) is important to help guide decisions but smell and taste are the most reliable indicators.

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Testing

It is suggested that there is a difference in grape varieties and their propensity to exhibit taint. Pinot Noir appears to be the most susceptible, whereas other varieties such as Zinfandel are potentially less so. As for Chardonnay, our other staple variety at Williams Selyem, it is whole-cluster pressed and the residual time the juice is on the skins is minimal, so the risk of extracting skin-bound volatiles (i.e. smoke taint) is low.

Williams Selyem was, and is, fortunate to have the resources to be able to do extensive testing on many levels. Tests were performed at the grape (picking/sorting) level, during fermentation, and throughout aging to assess quality. We knew the fruit was fantastic, we just needed to prove the absence of contamination. Furthermore, in testing previous vintages of bottled wines from smoke-free years, it was evident that the smoke volatiles can be, and are, ubiquitous and naturally occurring. That is, there is a natural background level of these compounds even without smoke.

The Pick Call

Because of the extreme heat, as mentioned, the pick call for August 12 changed everything. There were three factors from the 2020 Walbridge and other fires that affected pervasive smoke taint: (1) the point at which the smoke settled, (2) the intensity of the smoke, and (3) the duration of smoke exposure. The most affected regions in Sonoma County tended to be the colder locations, where vineyards have a tendency to be later maturing. Thus, at the time when the smoke settled, many of the Pinot Noir vineyards on the coast were not yet close to their pick date, or pick 'call' as we say around here and needed to 'hang out' longer. Of course, in 2020 the longer the exposure on the vine the higher the risk! Thankfully, most of Williams Selyem's vineyards, and our grower partner vineyards, are in warmer microclimates and were either already picked by August 17 or close to harvest at the start of the Walbridge Fire. Thus, the grapes were either not exposed (because they were already picked) or had very little exposure to smoke. As you can imagine, this was a huge relief to us all!

Making the Best Wine, From the Best Grapes

Regrettably, wine from the cooler sites, mostly in the Sonoma Coast AVA and a few in the later ripening area of the Russian River Valley, were the ones that suffered. Therefore, after extensive testing and evaluation, the following Pinot Noir wines unfortunately were not produced in 2020 due to smoke-related taint: Olivet Lane (spring release), Sonoma Coast AVA (spring release), Terra de Promissio (spring release), Precious Mountain (fall release), Coastlands (fall release), and Drake Estate (tasting salon wine). The remaining wines that are of outstanding quality amount to about 80% of our normal production.

Our goal has always been and will always be to make the best wine, from the best grapes from the best growers. That credo carried us through this very tough vintage by reminding us that we will only ever offer bottlings that we are proud of, that express the specific winemaking styles that Williams Selyem is known for, and the land from which they are grown. The ten wines offered in the spring release are an outstanding showing of the 2020 vintage and a perfect example of our mantra, 'fanatical attention to detail' and a nod to the foundation of winemaking excellence and the year after year endurance over adversity that Burt and Ed established so many years ago.

A Moment of Gratitude

While fire events are no longer new in Sonoma County, there is still so much to be thankful for even with tragedy and loss all around us from the 2017 Tubbs Fire and most recently the Walbridge Fire. I am thankful our community has remained safe and specifically that our vineyards, the winery buildings and infrastructure were unharmed. This harvest was an endeavor we won't soon forget, as the fire got as close as two miles away from the winery. Through cooperation with County officials, we were able to navigate road closures with special County Ag permits and were able to get in and perform punch downs on the fermenting tanks during this rather tumultuous and scary time.

I am incredibly proud of the entire Williams Selyem winemaking team for their willingness and determination through those incredibly challenging and perilous times to continue to forge ahead to make these wines. Their dedication has no bounds. With the aid of analytical tools, extensive sensory evaluation, and sheer will, the WS production team, with the support of John and Kathe Dyson, did everything possible to make superior wines from the 2020 vintage. On behalf of all our staff at Williams Selyem, we are extremely proud to present these wines to you.

PINOT NOIR

Elegant

2020 Central Coast Pinot Noir **\$39**
SAN BENITO COUNTY 13.9% ALC.

Sourced from the younger vines from Vista Verde, the wine showcases aromas of dark fruits and berry along with hints of purple flowers. Notes of pomegranate and wood spices complete this delightful and easy drinking Central Coast offering. Berry and dried herb flavors abound in the mouth and lead into a soft and round texture. The wine finishes with elegant tannins and a subtle mineral-like sensation.

2020 Sonoma County Pinot Noir **\$39**
SONOMA COUNTY 13.8% ALC.

Strawberry and red fruits jump from the glass in this multifaceted wine. Complexed with notes of sassafras and bergamot, aromas of dried rose petal are layered in the nose and offer up classic Pinot Noir perfume. In the mouth, the wine has a sense of roundness and harmony that is satisfying and refreshing. Dark red fruit flavors mix with hints of cocoa and wood spices. Sourced from various vineyards in the Russian River Valley including some younger blocks from the various Estate vineyards.

Medium-Bodied

2020 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir **\$62**
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY 14.1% ALC.

Deep and dark in color, the Russian River Valley offering has a complex array of fruit, floral, and citrus aromas. The wine has some mature blocks of Pommard from the WS Estate and early sites from the Santa Rosa Plain area of the Russian River Valley. With refreshing acidity and breadth of palate, this is a serious wine with red and black fruit flavors mixing with notes of citrus and black tea.

2020 Westside Road Neighbors Pinot Noir **\$78**
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY 14.1% ALC.

Terrific Pinot Noir perfume jumps from the glass with notes of dark cherry and sassafras. Wood spices of nutmeg and allspice are layered into the fabric of this classic wine. Supported by complexing aromas of tangerine and dried herbs, the Westside Road Neighbors is multi-faceted. In the mouth, the wine offers verve and tenacity with red fruits and citrus flavors wrapped up with a refined tannin structure and a finish of minerals.

CHARDONNAY

2020 Unoaked Chardonnay **\$39**
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY 13.6% ALC.

Crisp and fresh, the Unoaked Chardonnay has a charm and elegance. Fermented in stainless steel tanks and aged on the lees, the wine showcases the breadth of character of older vine Chardonnay. Notes of Meyer lemon, quince, pear, and pear skin combine with a delicate white flower aroma. The palate has depth and polish but with tenacity owing to the tannins in the thick skins of these older vines. The lees stirring during aging, coupled with the refreshing acidity, creates a harmonious structure and texture.

2020 Heintz Vineyard Chardonnay **\$65**
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY 14.3% ALC.

Sitting high above the western edge of the Green Valley boundary, the Heintz Vineyard enjoys nice, warm days often above the fog line. As a consequence of its exposure, the wines tend to run the gamut of aromas, from tropical to melon to apple notes. The slow ripening process helps to preserve the acidity while developing great structure. Notes of soil-inflected powdery minerals are apparent on the finish, owing to the terrific Goldridge soils in which these vines are grown.

2020 Olivet Lane Vineyard Chardonnay **\$65**
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY 14.5% ALC.

Yellow apple and pear highlight the aromatics of this old-vine Chardonnay vineyard. Hints of lemon curd belie the fruit along with a subtle starfruit aromatic. Fresh ground nutmeg and allspice from the modest oak usage support the fruit elements and give the wine a little counterpoint to the treble of the fruit tones. The yellow apple aromas carry through to the palate and are wrapped up in nice acidity and excellent tannin structure. A powdery, mineral finish of crushed rocks accents the finish and is nicely punctuated.

GEWÜRZTRAMINER

2020 Vista Verde Vineyard Late Harvest Gewürztraminer **\$40/375 mL**
SAN BENITO COUNTY 9.8% ALC.

Gewurztraminer has a distinctive nose that is unmistakable. Rose petal and lychee nut aromas again dominate the aromatics. Hints of waxy yellow fruits emerge with a little more aeration along with wood spices. Fermented in new, French oak barrels, the wine is elegantly layered with hints of vanilla. Just the right ratio of sweetness to acid creates a rather lithe palate that is never heavy.

ZINFANDEL

2020 Fanucchi-Wood Road Vineyard Zinfandel

RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

\$65

14.9% ALC.

The electric color immediately tempts and lures in the senses. Deep and brooding, the aromas convey notes of boysenberry and blackberry pie along with highlights of raspberry compote and other red fruits. Complexed with notes of anise and fennel, the nose offers a kaleidoscope of aromas. Tannic and mouth coating, the palate offers a dense and compact wine with refreshing acidity to create a harmony that is unparalleled for Zinfandel. These century old vines are a testament to what monumental wines can be achieved.

2020 Papera Vineyard Zinfandel

RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

\$65

15.1% ALC.

Fresh blackberry notes with hints of black peppercorn mix with aromas of fennel and star anise in this classic Zinfandel. Currant and red fruit notes further add to the complexity of the aromas. Lavender and purple flowers add a wonderful counterpoint to the brooding nature of this wine. A neighbor to our Saitone Estate vineyard, this region of the Russian River Valley is well known for producing Zinfandels with refreshing acidity and a tannic core. Extract from these lower yielding old vines buffers this structure, gives the palate flesh, and creates balance. Enjoy this wine with a hearty dish like braised short ribs (see Ming Tsai's Blue Ginger recipe for Aromatic Braised Short Ribs with Napa Cabbage-Orzo Stew, included in this newsletter).

On our website, you will find tasting sheets in PDF format for each of these new releases as well as most of our library wine. These downloadable documents include tasting notes, technical information, and a vintage summary. A recommended cellaring timeframe can be found on the wine page. To access this information, visit www.williamsselyem.com and navigate to the 'Wine Library' section where you can search by wine name, varietal, vintage, vineyard, or region (AVA).

BLUE GINGER AROMATIC BRAISED SHORT RIBS WITH NAPA CABBAGE-ORZO STEW

MAKES 10-12 SERVINGS

SOURCE: BLUE GINGER BY MING TSAI AND ARTHUR BOEHM

FOR THE SHORT RIBS:

1/2 CUP ANCHO CHILE POWDER
1/4 CUP SALT, PLUS ADDITIONAL AS NEEDED
2 TABLESPOONS FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER, PLUS
ADDITIONAL AS NEEDED
15 DOUBLE-RIB SHORT RIBS, CUT INTO 3-INCH-LONG PIECES
(HAVE THE BUTCHER DO THIS)
4 TABLESPOONS CANOLA OIL
5 MEDIUM ONIONS, CUT INTO 1/2-INCH DICE
3 MEDIUM FENNEL BULBS, CORED AND CUT INTO 1 1/2-INCH DICE,
FRONDS RESERVED FOR GARNISH
4 CELERY STALKS, CUT INTO 1/2-INCH DICE
4 LARGE CARROTS, PEELED AND CUT INTO 1 1/2-INCH DICE
1/2 CUP FINELY CHOPPED GARLIC
1/2 CUP FINELY CHOPPED FRESH GINGER
1/2 CUP FERMENTED BLACK BEANS, RINSED AND DRAINED
1 BOTTLE DRY RED WINE
1 (1-POUND) CAN WHOLE PLUM TOMATOES WITH THEIR JUICE
1 CUP DARK SOY SAUCE
1/2 BUNCH FRESH THYME, OR 1 TABLESPOON DRIED
4 BAY LEAVES
4 STAR ANISE

FOR ORZO STEW:

6 TABLESPOONS BUTTER
2 MEDIUM ONIONS, CUT INTO 1/4-INCH SLICES
1 POUND ORZO
2 HEADS NAPA CABBAGE, CUT INTO 1/4-INCH RIBBONS
SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
4 TO 5 CUPS CHICKEN STOCK, LOW-SODIUM CANNED BROTH, OR
WATER WITH 2 LADLES OF THE RIB COOKING LIQUID ADDED

IN A SMALL BOWL, COMBINE THE CHILE POWDER, THE 1/4 CUP SALT, AND THE 2 TABLESPOONS PEPPER AND MIX WELL. SEASON THE RIBS WELL WITH THE MIXTURE.

HEAT A VERY LARGE POT OR DUTCH OVEN OVER HIGH HEAT. ADD 2 TABLESPOONS OF THE OIL AND SWIRL TO COAT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAN. WHEN THE OIL SHIMMERS, ADD THE RIBS AND BROWN ON ALL SIDES, 10 TO 12 MINUTES. REMOVE THE RIBS, WIPE OUT THE PAN, AND ADD THE REMAINING 2 TABLESPOONS OF OIL. WHEN THE OIL SHIMMERS, ADD THE ONIONS, FENNEL, CELERY, CARROTS, GARLIC, GINGER, AND BLACK BEANS AND SAUTE, STIRRING, UNTIL THE VEGETABLES ARE SOFT, ABOUT 10 MINUTES. ADD THE WINE, STIR, AND COOK TO REDUCE THE LIQUID BY ONE-FOURTH, ABOUT 15 MINUTES. ADD THE TOMATOES WITH THEIR JUICE, SOY SAUCE, THYME, BAY LEAVES, AND STAR ANISE. RETURN THE RIBS TO THE POT, ADD WATER TO COVER, AND SEASON WITH SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE. BRING THE MIXTURE TO A BOIL, REDUCE THE HEAT, AND SIMMER SLOWLY, COVERED, UNTIL THE MEAT FALLS FROM THE BONES, 3 TO 4 HOURS.

CAREFULLY REMOVE THE RIBS AND KEEP THEM WARM. REMOVE THE ANISE, BAY LEAVES, AND FRESH THYME SPRIGS, IF USING, FROM THE SAUCE. SKIM THE SAUCE TO REMOVE THE FAT AND HEAT OVER MEDIUM HEAT TO REDUCE SLIGHTLY, ABOUT 10 MINUTES. USING A HAND BLENDER OR FOOD PROCESSOR, BLEND THE SAUCE UNTIL SMOOTH. CORRECT THE SEASONINGS.

MEANWHILE, MAKE THE ORZO STEW. HEAT A LARGE SAUCEPAN OVER HIGH HEAT. ADD 2 TABLESPOONS OF THE BUTTER AND SWIRL TO COAT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAN. ADD THE ONIONS AND SAUTE, STIRRING, UNTIL SOFT, ABOUT 8 MINUTES. ADD THE ORZO AND COOK, STIRRING OCCASIONALLY, UNTIL WELL HEATED, ABOUT 5 MINUTES. ADD THE CABBAGE AND SAUTE, STIRRING, UNTIL SOFT, 3 TO 5 MINUTES. SEASON WITH SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE. ADD THE STOCK IN 1-CUP INCREMENTS, ALLOWING IT TO BE ABSORBED BY THE ORZO BEFORE ADDING MORE, AND COOK UNTIL THE ORZO IS SOFT, 25 TO 30 MINUTES. KEEP IN MIND THAT THE CABBAGE WILL RELEASE WATER; YOU MAY NOT NEED ALL THE STOCK. STIR IN THE REMAINING 4 TABLESPOONS OF BUTTER.

MOUND THE STEW IN A LARGE BOWL. TOP WITH THE RIBS AND LADLE OVER THE SAUCE. GARNISH WITH THE FENNEL FRONDS AND SERVE.

SERVE WITH THE 2020 PAPER A VINEYARD ZINFANDEL.

Wine Pickup

CALIFORNIA

- At the time of writing, we are unsure whether we will be able to hold the pickup weekend event in the same format as in previous years. We will notify you via email when plans have been solidified.
- If you prefer to have a third party to pick up on your behalf, please select this option from the drop-down menu in your shopping cart or note it in the ship-to section of your order form. Be advised that the following require an account to be established prior to order pickup. Any shipping arrangements must be made directly with the third party of your choice.

55 Degrees Napa Valley, in Napa (707) 963-5513

All Ways Cool, in Santa Rosa (707) 545-7450

Oeno Vaults, in Santa Rosa (707) 595-3612

Vinfolio, in American Canyon (800) 969-1961

UPDATE: Fitch Mountain, in Healdsburg, has permanently closed.

NEW YORK

- If you intend to pick up your wine at Millbrook Winery, select the “NY Pickup” option.
- The dates for the Spring Pickup Weekend Event at Millbrook Winery are TBD. We will notify you with event information as soon as it becomes available.

Address: 26 Wing Road, Millbrook, NY 12545; Phone: (845) 677-8383 ext. 21;
Email address: millbrookwinery@millwine.com; Website: www.millbrookwine.com



Important Dates

MARCH 6

Close of Release

MARCH 7

Shipping Begins - Hot States
AL, AZ, FL, GA, LA, NC,
SC, TN, & TX

MARCH 21

Shipping to all other areas

TBD

Pickup Weekend Event at
Williams Selyem Estate Winery

TBD

Pickup Weekend Event
at Millbrook Winery in NY

CONTACT US

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Ordering

- Online ordering is strongly encouraged! To access your allocation, use the customized hyperlink in the email we'll send to you on the opening day of the release. Or, sign in via our website using your user credentials.
- Orders are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Allocations are not guaranteed; they represent the number of bottles available to you until the wine sells out (which is often before the last day to order). Please place your order as soon as possible for best order fulfillment.
- For bottles beyond your allocation, please use the wish list column. These requests will be filled, if possible, before the close of the release (March 6). You do not need to include payment for wish list wines; we will charge or invoice your account later if the request is filled.
- If paying by check, please send via mail to 7227 Westside Rd, Healdsburg CA 95448
- Order confirmations will be sent via email. Please verify your email address!
- Faxed or mailed orders submitted without payment will not be filled; phone and email orders are not accepted.

Shipping

- Wines will begin shipping on Monday, March 7 for orders shipping to (AL, AZ, FL, GA, LA, NC, SC, TN, & TX). Orders shipping to all other states will begin on Monday, March 21.
- Some states do not permit direct wine shipments, or they may limit the amount of wine we can ship to you. Please see our website for more details and shipping/handling fees.
- We require a valid shipping address (sorry, no PO Boxes) where there is someone 21+ years of age available to sign for the package during regular business hours.