

Wine Club Selections for the Fellow Traveler and Card Carrier

Our first pick of the 2023 vintage is scheduled for Monday, (September 4th)- mixed sparkling lots from the Layne Vineyard. The vineyards look fantastic. As a matter of fact, this is the best-looking crop we have had in years. We dodged frost. Fruit-set was nearly ideal. The season, which started cool, has been evenly warm and dry. Mildew is not an issue. We have a great crew in the vineyard and in the winery. Everything is lining up wonderfully, except for just one little thing.

Smoke.

We had smoke during the ripening season this year. I say “had”, because as of this writing, the smoke has cleared out fabulously. Actually, I’m sitting outside on my patio writing this because I’m enjoying the clear skies and mild temperatures. The weather pattern has shifted to come from the Northwest, typical for the season, pushing smoke away from our valleys. Rain is even in the forecast.

For better or for worse, we have plenty of experience with smoke. At least seven of the last ten vintages have had some amount of smoke impact. We’ve learned a lot in the process. We’ve learned that most of the reactive compounds are very heavy, and they tend to fall out of the air unless the fire is very close. This means that even though the air might be poor, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the wine will be negatively affected. We know that certain winemaking techniques exacerbate smoke compounds, while others minimize them. Ultimately, we’ve got the tools, and we know how to use them.

Furthermore, I did a little research, and as bad as this year is, there are plenty of other recent vintages that were worse. 2017, 2018 and 2021 all had longer periods of smoke exposure for the valleys. In those years, many great wines were made, including the 2017 Syrah 4,2-a, which won best of show at the Oregon Wine Experience, the 2021 Pistoleta, which was named Best in Class at the New World Wine Challenge, and the 2018 Syrah, Mae’s Vineyard, which was named Best in Class at the Oregon Wine Experience last year.

They say that there is no one more optimistic than a farmer. No one else would pay retail, sell wholesale, put himself at the mercy of forces that he can’t control and convince himself that he’s the lucky one. Winegrowers are likewise notoriously optimistic, driven by a combination of faith and hope. Who else would commit themselves to an endeavor that might create something of value in no less than a decade? In the end, wines are the results of hundreds of decisions, the first one being where to plant and the last one being when to open the bottle. The great wines this year will be no different, and we’ve already started making decisions that will shape them.

I look forward to sharing them with you.

Enjoy,

Herb Quady

It is the opinion of the writer that a consistent supply of cold bubbles, ready and available to enjoy without needing any convenient excuse (such as birthdays, Arbor Day, etc.) should be viewed as more of a conscious decision about how to arrange one's resources, rather than a true indulgence. In fact, in my own household, it was declared, not that long ago, that this was now a minimum standard to uphold, which might be a daunting prospect if we weren't in the business of making the stuff.

I lead with this little insight into Quady household dynamics just so that readers can understand that while we shoot for the highest levels of quality on all our wines, our sparkling program is particularly subject to high levels of scrutiny, on a very regular basis.

Basically, we love bubbles. We love them and drink them and are very lucky that we make some very good ones. We've been working on this particular sparkling program for some time, beginning in 2013. Over time, we began to speculate that by extending the *tirage*¹ time on the Sparkling Franc, we could fatten up the mid-palate of this wine, since it is the dissolution of yeast cells that contribute to richness in sparkling wines. We made two batches from the 2019 vintage to test this theory. The first batch was released late in 2021. The second batch was kept for another year on the yeast lees before disgorging. This is the version in your club shipment, and is the one that we prefer.

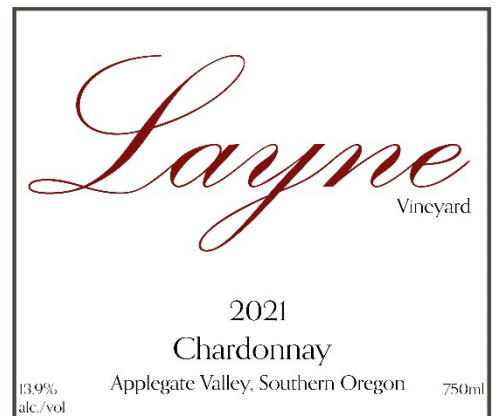
It is hoped that you are as enamored by this incredibly unique bottling as we are. It's not expected that you should make this a daily drinker, but if you do, we completely understand.

Perhaps more than any other variety, Chardonnay is reflective of the winemaking process. It's capable of undergoing extreme divergence depending on the choices of the winemaker. In Oregon, a deep divide exists: Oak or No Oak. Proponents of the latter advocate that stainless steel fermentation and aging better showcases purity of fruit. Followers of the former method argue that oak creates texture and layers of complexity.

At Quady North, we have firmly placed our flag in the pro-oak camp. I find that Chardonnay and oak work very well with each other, although certainly more is not more, and the choice of barrels is incredibly important. The goal is to create a wine where oak acts to make the wine richer and more textured than it otherwise would be, but where you can't actually taste the barrel itself. This is easier said than done, but is possible by choosing the correct cooperage.



2019 "Q-Vée" Extended Tirage
Sparkling Rosé of Cabernet Franc (aka
Cobra Bubbles).
Applegate Valley, Southern Oregon
\$45/\$36 (Underground)



2021 Chardonnay, Layne Vineyard
Applegate Valley, Southern Oregon
\$32/\$25.60

¹ *Tirage* is a French winemaking term that refers to the period of time when sparkling wines are laying down, usually in racks or bins, aging on the yeast lees before they are disgorged. *Tirage* can be months or many years.

It is said that most of the trees from which we source barrels from today were planted by Napoleon, who wanted to ensure that the France of the future would always have the world's best navy. His efforts resulted in a system of oak forests in France that are owned and managed by the central government, each with its own quality and characteristics. Indeed, the world of barrels is wonderfully complex. Coopers put incredible amounts of thought and research into a myriad of factors, including which forest the wood is sourced from, how tight the wood grain is, how many years the wood is "seasoned" (aged outside) and the amount of toast to which each stave is subject.

The 2021 Layne Chardonnay was ultimately aged in only four barrels, one of which was new. That barrel creates most of the oak influence in the lot, although not all of it. The new barrel was coopered by Damy, a historic cooperage in Burgundy, that specializes in barrels for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Damy barrels are known for subtlety and balance. This one was aged for three years, with tight grain staves and toasted at a "medium" level. It was designed not for impact, but for grace, and I believe it serves that function well in this wine.

Stop me if you've heard me tell this story before. "It was 1995. A young Herb leads his then girlfriend Meloney on foot all around Paris, mostly because he is poor at judging distance as well as understanding the map of the Metro. At the end of the day, exhausted, they find an obliging bistro with a *prix fixe* menu that they can afford. Meloney has tomatoes, garlic and pasta with goat cheese, Herb has *steak frites* and they share a glass of red wine from the Loire."

This meal would end up being one of the most impactful ones of their lives. The lesson was, a simple meal, well prepared, with fresh, whole ingredients, is always satisfying. To this day, fresh pasta with fresh whole tomatoes, garlic and goat cheese is one of Meloney's favorite meals. Herb took home another lesson. The red wine of the Loire valley, the everyday version, is the workhorse of the Paris bistro.



2021 "La Battalla"
Rogue Valley, Southern Oregon
\$22/\$17.60

I have always remembered that wine and have always wanted to make my own version of it. Along the way, I learned that the wine was probably from the *Touraine* region. It could have contained any number of different varieties, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Gamay Noir, but likely contained Cabernet Franc and Côt, a local clone of Malbec.

With each vintage, I feel like we move closer and closer to the conceptual ideal. The idea behind this wine is that it should be an everyday red with personality. There should be edges. It might be a little rustic. It should not be completely smooth and polished, as many Quady North wines are. Rather it should be lively, it should contend a bit with that steak. It does not simply become a part of the tableau, but rather pulls the conversation to it.

With the “Battalla”, process is the product. We pick Cabernet Franc and Malbec on the same day and co-ferment them, leaving the Malbec as whole clusters. Early maceration is done through treading², until enough juice is liberated to allow for the wine to be pumped over. Instead of commercial yeast, we create a *pie de cuvee*³ from Mae’s Vineyard Cabernet Franc. In the end, the wine is pressed off, early, and barreled down to neutral French Oak.

The idea is to replicate winemaking processes that would have been done traditionally for millennia in that part of France and in doing so create a wine that might approximate what Mel and I might have enjoyed in that little bistro so many years ago.

We jealously guard a few sites in the Applegate Valley that grow delicious Cabernet Franc. Each sits at similar elevation, with similar soils. In the winery, they act like variations on a theme, being both distinctly Applegate in their tannin profile and tendency toward minty and peppery notes, while also being unique. Castellano, on the steep, West facing hillside, is always the most tannic and structured. Layne is more cocoa and mint. Mae’s is more supple than the others, and maintains that distinctive red pepper note.

In other years, we would have had fruit from the Serra (formerly Frank’s vineyard) or even Wooldridge Creek. However, by 2019, red blotch had claimed those sites, and we no longer saw the ripeness that we enjoyed once upon a time.

By 2020, I knew that we would have to eventually remove our own Eevee’s Cabernet Franc. There was too much Red Blotch in the vineyard, and it was spreading faster than we could remove it. In that same year, Monnie Hedges, fellow Applegator, asked if I would help him design and install a new vineyard off of N. Applegate Rd. Realizing that we would soon face a deficit in Cabernet Franc, I encouraged him to plant some additional Franc there. This fruit, as well as Gamay Noir, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Mourvèdre, were harvested for the first-time last year, and will be fully in bearing this year. It will be fun to have yet another source of Franc in the winery, from a site near the river, and a different soil type. I look forward to being able to increase our Cabernet Franc production, which has been limited in recent years.



2019 Cabernet Franc
Applegate Valley, Southern Oregon
\$35.00/\$28.00

² Somehow “treading” evokes slightly sexier imagery than “stomping”, although both are accurate.

³ This begins by picking two buckets of grapes, crushing them in the vineyard, and leaving them overnight. This allows a fermentation to begin with the yeast that is on the grapes themselves instead of yeast that is airborne in the winery. We build the fermentation up over time and use it to inoculate Cabernet Franc lots for Quady North.

