

Wine Club Selections for the Pinko Member

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.

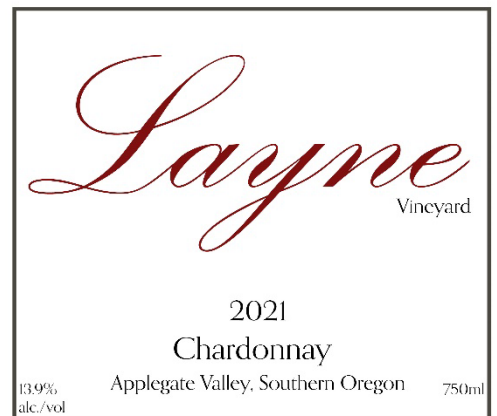
It is hoped that you are as enamored by this incredibly unique bottling as we are. It's not expected that you should make this a daily drinker, but if you do, we completely understand.

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.

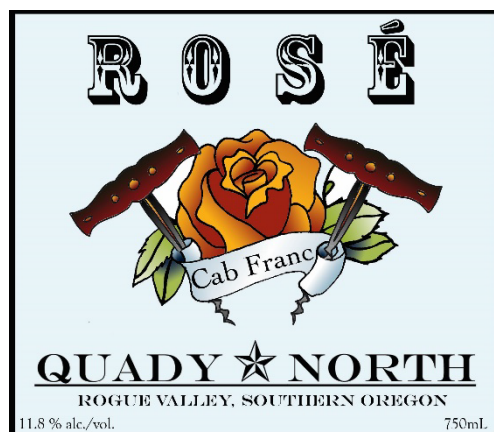
The 2021 Layne Chardonnay was ultimately aged in only four barrels, one of which was new. That barrel creates most of the oak influence in the lot, although not all of it. The new barrel was coopered by Damy, a historic cooperage in Burgundy, that specializes in barrels for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. 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.

Back in the lineup, after a 10 year hiatus, is our Rosé of Cabernet Franc. We made this wine in 2011 and 2012, part of a long line of small lot alternate Rosé offerings that have included single varietal Counoise, Grenache, and even Mourvèdre.²

Why the gap? In 2013, because of Meloney's love of pink sparkling wines, I diverted our Franc to make our first Methode Champenoise wine, the "Q-Vée." It wasn't until 2022 that a new source of fruit, grafted over specifically for Rosé and sparkling, came into bearing.

This site, farmed by Richard Kelly near Eagle Point, is trellised in the "V" style that I am so fond of. The catch wires are spread apart at the top of the trellis, by about 24", allowing some shading of the fruit. This shading is very important for both sparkling and Rosé as it prevents skins from thickening and developing excess tannin, which can be a problem in Rosés made from Bordeaux varieties.

Although not specifically named, Malbec plays an important role in this Rosé. Co-fermented with the Franc, the Malbec adds color and some mid-palate fleshiness that offsets Franc's natural raciness. Like the Grenache and Counoise before, this is definitely the house favorite. It's equal parts geeky and sublime, quirky and comforting.



2022 Rosé of Cabernet Franc
Rogue Valley, Southern Oregon
\$19.50/\$15.60

² This was released keg only to a set of restaurants in Portland. Kind of like a B-side that was only published in Japan.

