

Wine Club Selections for the Whites Roder

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,

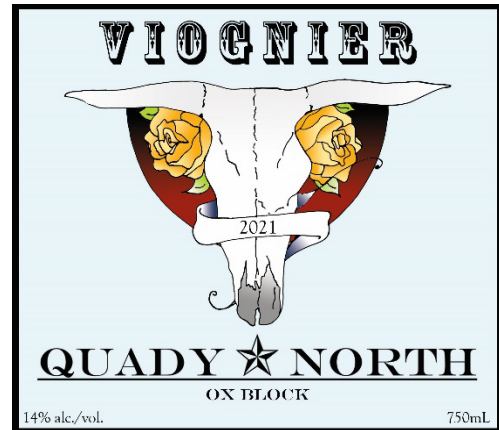
Herb Quady

Viognier is tricky. Sure, you can say that about a lot of winemaking, but certain things are obvious in their difficulty. Sparkling wine, for example, which contains many technical aspects, specialized equipment, etc, is obviously tricky. Pinot Noir is notoriously finicky, as is Nebbiolo. Viognier fools you. It's relatively well behaved in the vineyard, not sensitive to mildew, nor overly vigorous. It ferments well, always aromatic and promising. The tricky part is creating a texture profile that matches the beautiful aromatics. When you smell Viognier, you expect a lot. Rich and perfumed, it promises a wine that is equally rich. However, on its own, Viognier tends not to deliver on that promise. It's up to the winemaker to create that mid-palate texture. In Chardonnay, oak barrels work wonderfully to create richness, working naturally with the characteristics of the variety. However, in Viognier, oak destroys the naturally fruit driven aromatics. In order to create texture in Viognier, we employ our own trickery. We find that Acacia barrels provide texture, while also favoring the natural tropical and citrus notes in Viognier. Additionally, we've been using a type of clay amphora, traditional to Italy. We like the amphora so much that we purchased another, larger one this year. Both these methods circulate the yeast lees, letting the yeast cell walls dissolve back into the wine, while also maintaining the classic fruit notes of Viognier.

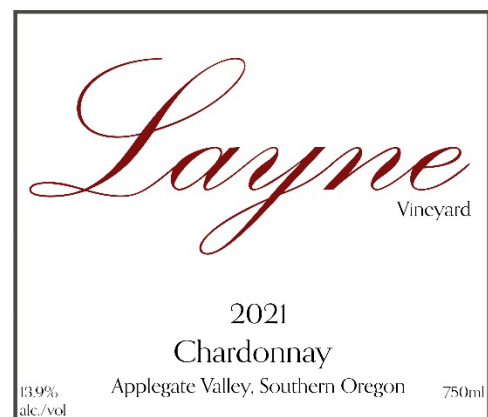
We've been alternating between Steelhead Run, Ox Block and "Steel-Ox" for several years, each year choosing amongst the vineyards and selecting the lot that stands best on its own. In 2021, the rich, citrus driven Ox Block won out. This is one of my favorite Viogniers ever made. I love how well we've managed to create texture in the middle of the wine that matches the aromatics.

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



2021 Viognier, Ox Block
 Applegate Valley, Southern Oregon
 \$24/\$19.20



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

can't actually taste the barrel itself. This is easier said than done, but is possible by choosing the correct cooperage.

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.