

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

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Introduction

The fires in the west coast states include the Glass Fire, still raging in Napa and Sonoma. So far it has damaged or destroyed 28 wineries and hotels. It is still only 25% contained as of Saturday evening. We believe that our family, friends and suppliers are, so far, all safe and only slightly scathed. Our best wishes to them and everyone in California, Oregon and Washington.

Last week the calendar said that summer was over and we had started autumn. The weather does not seem to be paying heed. Phoenix is going for a record number of 100 degree days in a row.

This month, Leslie focuses on Jeff Runquist wines, ideal for the coming season and its celebrations. Let's hope that the weather and virus cooperate!

Jeff Runquist Wines

Portfolio Notes - by Leslie Zellmer

Before I began working at Orangewood Wines, I was already quite familiar with the wines Jeff Runquist was famous for making. I knew then what I still know today, people love his wines! Jeff is skilled at crafting wines that are smooth, luxurious, friendly to the palate and always with an interesting varietal. Additionally, his label designer is, in my opinion, a marketing genius: a simple black bottle with a copper "R" on the front. People see it once and they remember it. Folks say, "I'm looking for the wine with a letter on it". Well, look closer and it is actually a "J" and an "R" for Jeff Runquist.

Jeff began making wine while studying enology at UC Davis in California. He went on to work for several wineries, one of which was J Lohr. It was there that he decided he would make his own wine. His first release in 1997 was an Amador Zinfandel.

Today, Jeff and his wife Margie run their winery and tasting room on Shenandoah Road in Amador County. Zinfandel is still a focus for Jeff, he makes three: Z Zinfandel, Estate Zinfandel and a single vineyard offering from Esola Vineyard in Amador. He sources fruit from all over California. Each varietal is hand selected from the best vineyards in the best appellations. His



other core wines are Barbera, Petit Verdot, Petite Sirah and a juicy red blend called 1448 (referring to the elevation of the winery) that is primarily Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot with a sprinkling of other varietals. Try it with a spicy shredded beef taco.

Back in 2017, my colleagues and I visited the winery. First, we were greeted by the comforting sight of chickens pecking the ground. We spent some time in the tasting room with Jeff, Margie and crew after their busy day. They treated us to a delicious home cooked meal of Mushroom Risotto by Margie and grilled Ribeye by Jeff, followed by a cozy fire side chat. We stayed in their beautiful guest houses - the one I scored had a wall of floor to ceiling windows that opened to the vineyard. Morning coffee overlooking the vineyards was quite a treat.

The wine club at Jeff Runquist has a significant following. With many exciting wines produced, a club membership is a great option for diehard fans. Orangewood carries about ten wines from their lineup. Occasionally, I must beg Margie for a case or two of one of their smaller production offerings for a local customer. She usually grants the request, so do not be afraid to ask us to source something special for you.

With the temps in Arizona cooling slightly, grab some Jeff Runquist wine and enjoy the start of Fall.

The Rambler

I really don't like the microtargeting of advertisements. There is a big gathering of information that then allows gatherers of the data to make lots of money from advertisers looking for the kind of person I am. I am reminded of this from time to time when I happen to buy something on-line. Usually Laurie does all the on-line purchasing. She knows our credit card numbers by heart and looks for the best deal. However, recently I purchased a relatively small wine refrigerator. The purpose is to have an emergency stash of wine in the house, to avoid stumbling along to our room sized wine cellar, and to keep our butter nearby at a nice temperature. (Butter in wine refrigerators was the mentioned in [a ramble from 2017](#).) I actually looked at the instructions. They are fine for getting the fridge plugged in, but not so helpful regarding filling it.

Refrigerators do not need to be completely filled right away. If this is your first time having one, it is also a good time to work your relationship with your local wine supplier. Hopefully, she or he is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about wine and can give you advice on what to try. Let's say they recommend six wines targeted at your preferences. You try those and give them feedback on how those worked. Maybe buy a couple of bottles of the ones you really liked and explore some more. But this doesn't fill my fridge, you say. The trick here is to add some "thermal mass". Water is best. Put some bottles of water into the fridge along with your six bottles. You can even refill old wine bottles. Perhaps ones that you enjoyed and want to remember. Those refilled wine bottles also look more impressive than disposable plastic water bottles, as well as being better for the environment.

This way the fridge temperature will not vary as much when you open the door, have a power outage or the temperature drops too low for a while.

Now I have my new fridge operational, but the echoes of the purchase are continuing - every news article I read has advertisements for wine fridges. Buying a wine fridge is the only element of my profile that the big guys have to work with. Who knows what would happen if I showed any interest in pedicure equipment. I guess I would soon learn if something was afoot. The Rambler rambles on...

Cheers,

Richard and Laurie
Orangewood Wines

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