

Portland
Winemakers
Club



Portland Winemakers Club

May 2020
"Bill's Meanderings"

Monthly Events

January 15th, 2020

Crush Talk & Planning

January 25th, 2020

Annual Gala

February 19th, 2020

Bordeaux varietals and
Bordeaux blends, Blind
Tasting

March, 18th, 2020

Speaker **CANCELLED**

April 15th, 2020

ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

May 20th, 2020

Speaker? - **ZOOM VIRTUAL
MEETING**

June 17th, 2020

Speaker?

July

Annual Picnic

August 19th, 2020

All Whites Blind Tasting

September, 16th, 2020

Other Reds Blind Tasting

October 21st, 2020

Pinot Noir Blind Tasting

November 18th, 2020

Crush Talk

December 16th, 2020

Elections, Planning for Next
Year, More Crush Talk

NOTE: Tours, Gala & picnic
date & times may vary
depending on availability.

Besides having an immaculate yard, by our standards, I have been busy in the vineyard. Some shoots are already between 4" to 5". I'm actually caught up on pruning, spraying, mowing, and planting. Well close anyway. We tried something new this year, grafting. We lost our source of Wädenswil so we thought why not grow our own. We grafted onto some under performing 777 and are looking at a moderate success. At around 50% while not great we think not bad for having never done this before. We still have some buds that look undecided if they want to live or not so that percentage will hopefully go up.

Last months meeting using the Zoom media went quite well and I would like to thank John Kahrs for not only originally suggesting it but also taking the reins and forming the format and monitoring the event. We plan on a similar Zoom format for the next meeting with the topic to be determined soon.



2020 Pommard Pinot vintage fruit already hanging on the vine:



Bill and Marilyn's successful Wädenswil grafting:

Drink Responsibly.
Drive Responsibly.

Upcoming events / Save the date

Club Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for May, 20th at 6:45 pm. We are again going to hold the meeting using the virtual meeting service "Zoom". This will be available on any device that can connect to the internet and has a camera and speaker capability such as a computer, iPad or smart phone etc. Jon Kahrs will again be the moderator. We will provide further sign in information and other details by e-mail prior to the meeting.

Agenda: We will go through introductions and variety of club business possibly followed by a speaker. If a speaker is not available then we will have a general winemaking discussion with questions & hopefully answers.

Website: <http://portlandwinemakersclub.com/>



saperavi:

Old is New Again

by: Rich Rocca



The vintners of the northeastern United States have long searched for a red wine grape that could be their signature grape. Over the years, several varieties have been on the cusp of becoming the iconic red wine grape identified with the region for producing world-class wine. Vintages of Lemberger and Cabernet Franc have produced stellar wines that could hold their own with their counterparts from other regions but just couldn't elbow their way through a crowded field of reds for the attention of wine drinkers in the eastern U.S. and beyond.

The problem that Cabernet Sauvignon and similar grape varieties face is not being able to fully ripen in the growing conditions of the East Coast and many cool-climate regions. Vintners have always looked to other wine regions with comparable climates and soil profiles for vines that have well-established success in producing superior wines. What better place to begin your search for a new grape than the cradle of winemaking, the Kakheti Region of Georgia. Archeologists have found evidence of winemaking in the Kakheti and surrounding regions dating back as far as 6000 B.C. One of the modern grapes that can trace its origin to the beginning of winemaking history is Saperavi (*Vitis vinifera*).

Saperavi is a teinturier-type grape, which means it has a dark skin and pink-tinted pulp. A teinturier variety of grape will produce an intensely colored juice when crushed because both the skin and flesh contain the water-soluble pigment anthocyanin which is responsible for giving fruits and vegetables their red, blue and purple color. A common translation of Saperavi is "Dye" because it makes an extremely dark-colored wine. The reason Saperavi is a good match for the cool growing conditions of the East Coast is because it is a very adaptable loose bunch, late ripening wine grape that can produce large yields without sacrificing much in the way of fruit quality. Saperavi vines are able to thrive in cool-climate regions even at high altitudes because they have above average resistance to cold temperatures. Saperavi Severny is a hybrid of Saperavi and the Russian hybrid red grape Severny.

Saperavi Severny has a greater tolerance to cold and frost than Saperavi does. The greatly improved cold tolerance of Saperavi Severny is due to the genes it inherited from *Vitis amurensis* during its hybridization. Traditionally Georgian Saperavi wine has been blended with lesser wines but recently it has been gaining popularity as a varietal bottling as young winemakers begin to introduce modern winemaking methods and ideas to a new generation of Georgian wine drinkers.



Since ancient times in the Kakheti Region, Saperavi has been made in a *qvevri*. A *qvevri* is a large egg-shaped earthenware vessel, similar to an amphora without the handles, that has its interior sealed with beeswax and is buried in the ground or set into the floor of a winery to keep the temperature stable during fermentation. The process of making wine in a *qvevri* starts by pressing the grapes and then adding the juice along with the pomace (skin, stems, seeds and the naturally occurring yeasts) into the *qvevri*. Next the *qvevri* is sealed and left to ferment from three weeks to six months. Saperavi made with this method has a tannic character. Pheasant Tears is located in Signaghi, Georgia and is probably the most recognizable Georgian winery here in the U.S. All of the wines made at this winery are fermented and aged in *qvevris* rather than by conventional methods.

Since Saperavi grapevines are very adaptable it is not surprising that they are becoming established in vineyards around the world, most notably Australia and the East Coast of the United States but also China. Australian wine production from its approximately 4,000 wineries is dominated by Shiraz and

Chardonnay, making competition for market share acutely competitive. A growing number of ambitious vineyard managers have taken the speculative position of planting Saperavi on their properties. The majority of these plantings are in the warmer Barossa Valley and McLean Vale Regions. Saperavi can also be found in the cool-climate of the Alpine Valley Region of Victoria. The cool-climate produces a slender wine with an angular taste profile while the warmer climate renders a wine of muscular body and vivid taste. Warm-climate Saperavi is a recent phenomenon that only began after Saperavi started to be grown in Australia. They tend to be more opulent and open than their more restrained cool-climate counterparts. The warmer weather allows more acid to be converted to sugar making them more forward and ready to drink sooner than the cool-climate ones.

Cirami Estate Saperavi from the Riverland Region of South Australia is an excellent example of a warm-climate Saperavi. The Cirami Estate Saperavi is a big full-bodied wine with powerful tannins and aromas of dark fruit. Gapsted Wines is in Victoria's High Country and produces a quality cool-climate Saperavi from vineyards in the King Valley of the Alpine Valleys Wine Region. This wine displays a full body, solid tannins and long finish. The Australians use quite a bit more oak on their Saperavi than the American producers do because Aussie Saperavi is a bigger wine and can handle it. I am not aware of any Australian Saperavi being exported to the U.S. What little Saperavi that is exported goes to China where it has developed a "Cult" following.

Finger Lakes Connection

It wasn't until the early 1960s that Saperavi became established in North America when it took root in the Finger Lakes wine region of New York. The story of Saperavi in America is one of a long period of waiting in relative obscurity until the pieces of the Saperavi puzzle started to come together as the century changed. Today the State of New York boasts several wineries producing Saperavi plus the largest Saperavi vineyard outside of Georgia. The Saperavi being made in New York and Pennsylvania is breaking new ground for the winemakers who have invested so much of their time, money and reputation into this intriguing adventure that is now showing the early signs of the possibilities that lay ahead.

The deep waters of the Finger Lakes help to moderate the temperatures in the vineyards planted around their shores by storing the summer heat and releasing it throughout the winter and spring. Taking advantage of these ideal conditions, this highly resilient grape has proven itself with plentiful harvests that yield fruit which can be made into a varietal bursting with fruit flavors, lively acidity and firm but balanced tannins. New York

winemakers are experimenting with fresh ideas and techniques on each new vintage as they begin to master the art of drawing out the flavors and aromas hidden deep within the wine.

Most of the New York wineries making Saperavi grow Saperavi grapes in their vineyards. Fero Vineyards and Winery, in the heart of the Susquehanna River Valley of Central Pennsylvania, is the only winery growing and making Saperavi outside of the State of New York. If you are curious about this enticing wine, a visit to this region is certain to be an exciting learning experience, as well as an unforgettable adventure. While these wineries are relatively close geographically they all make a Saperavi that is truly representative of their terroir and winemaker's personal style.

To prove this point you have to look no further than the Saperavi produced by two iconic Finger Lakes winemakers. Dr. Konstantin Frank Saperavi is full-bodied with polished tannins, pronounced fruit flavors and juicy acidity. McGregor Vineyards Black Russian Red is a one-of-a-kind blend of Saperavi and Sereksiya Charni that makes a lush wine built on structured tannins with flavors of black currant, pineapple and vanilla. Other New York winemakers are pushing the envelope by making refreshed styles of Rosé, Kagor and intriguing new blends with their Saperavi grapes.

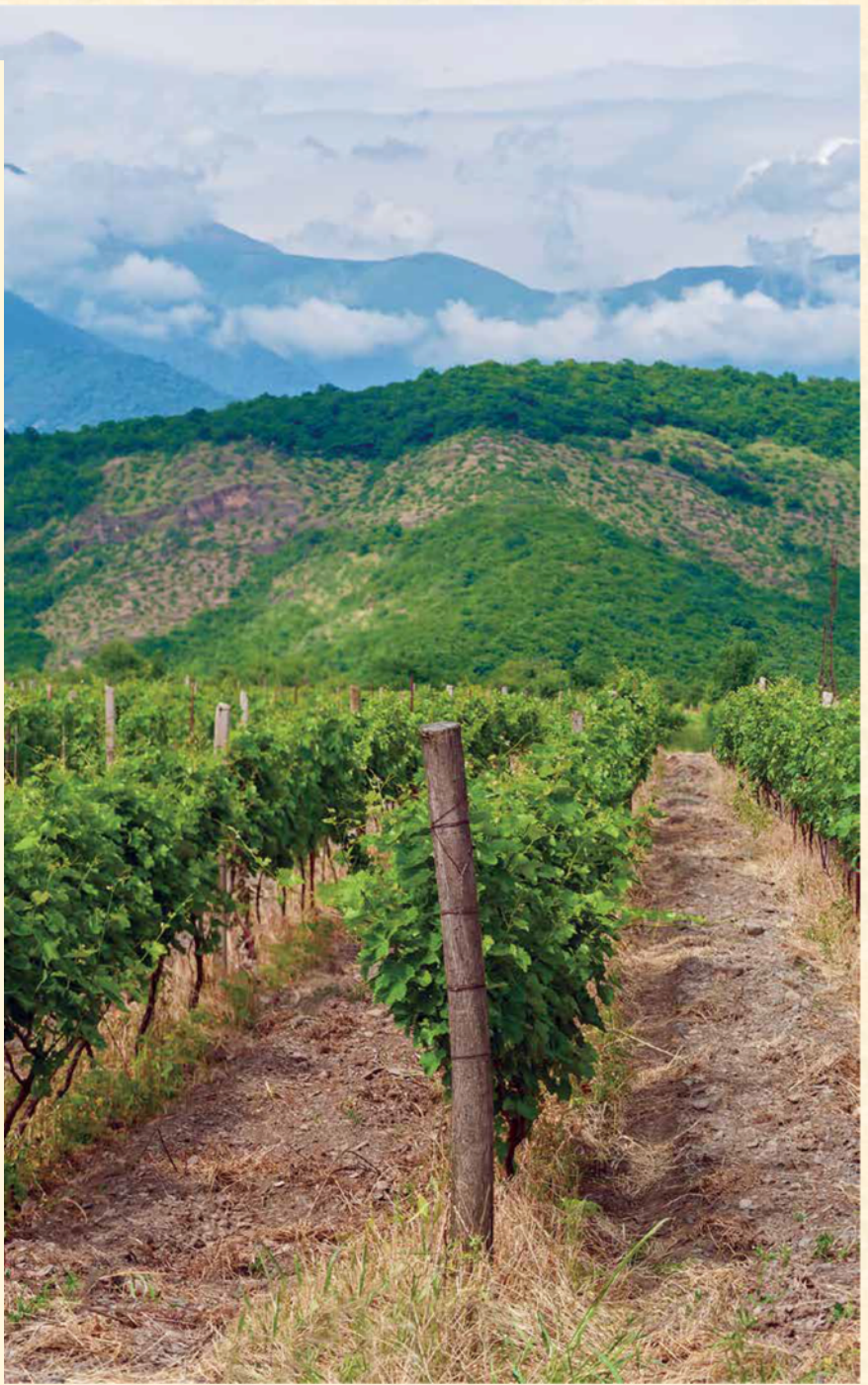
The Chinese Connection

The story of Saperavi in China is still in its infancy. The Chinese have a newly found love of wine and with a rapidly growing middle-class the demand for good wine will undoubtedly create an environment in which quality producers will have pricing power. China's diverse collection of growing regions combined with Saperavi's innate ability to adapt to growing conditions makes its success in China virtually guaranteed. Puchang Vineyards is one of the pioneering Chinese wineries that grow Saperavi under conditions that are challenging to say the least. Located in the wine region of Xinjiang, situated in Northwest China, it has mountains, basins and a large shifting sand desert with a semi-arid or desert climate. The Puchang Vineyards Saperavi is a medium-bodied deep red wine with spicy wood aromas, moderate acidity and dark fruit flavors.



Saperavi continues to increase its footprint in North America with three new plantings this spring joining an existing four-year-old one in Virginia. The southern expansion of Saperavi into Virginia represents a major reduction in latitude from around 43° North to 37° North that brings with it a change in terroir and climate that will certainly have a significant effect on the grapes and the wine they make while definitely bringing about change to Virginia's wine industry in the future.

The history of "Old World" Saperavi has been well documented over the centuries dating back to dawn of winemaking. Most of the methods used to make this wine have changed little over time from the way it is fermented and stored in large vessels in the ground to the traditions of the Georgian communities that are as intertwined with this grape as are the Saperavi vines themselves. The story of "New World" Saperavi is still in its early chapters but luckily for us it is being written by skilled winemakers that are fearless visionaries when it comes to the future they see for their wineries. The possibilities surrounding this wine are compelling and evolving with each new harvest. I invite you to join me and all the other adventurous wine drinkers on this journey of discovery. Ours is a pursuit of an ageless red wine grape being reinvented in vineyards a world away from its ancestral home by dreamers and risk takers as full of life as Saperavi itself. I urge you to indulge your inquisitive side and try Saperavi from anywhere in the world. I think you will be surprised and glad you got to taste something a little different.



Lodi:

The Languedoc of California

By Roger Morris

On your way through California have you ever visited & tasted the wines offered in the Lodi AVA? Here is some information for reference.

Only about 70 miles from Napa City lies Lodi, California. However, for the past century the distance between the Lodi and Napa has seemed much greater when it came to the wine business. In Lodi, with few exceptions, families grew grapes. In Napa, families made wine.

It was only one such family, but when Cesare and Rosa Mondavi with sons Michael and Peter left Lodi in the early 1930s (and their business of shipping wine grapes to home winemakers back east) and moved the 70 miles to Napa Valley for a new life as winemakers, it was a storybook example of what was transpiring in the post-Prohibition Northern California wine business.

Lodi has long been a part of that great wine lake that was the Central Valley, its juices flowing into millions of wine jugs and bargain basement bottles. It also grew table grapes. Meanwhile, Napa and nearby Sonoma County became world-famous wine regions, producing expensive, highly-rated wines that financed picture-book wineries and mansions to go with them. When the valley's patron saint, Robert Mondavi, achieved fame with wines made from his Napa To Kalon grapes, he returned to Lodi to produce entry-level wines to boost his business. That's all changing now.

Lodi Rules

In the past 20 years, Lodi has had an explosion of wineries and tasting rooms. Wine tourism is growing where it barely existed as late as the 1990s. Its Lodi Rules, adopted in 2005, have been taken as a model statewide for environmental sustainability.

In many ways, Lodi is the Languedoc of California. For over a century, both the American and French regions grew grapes that were made into plonk and occasionally were blended, legally or illegally, with grapes with better pedigrees. But now, as in Languedoc, Lodi is making quality wines that, under different conditions, it might have been producing years ago.

“When you look at Lodi, winemaking here is still in its infancy,” says Stuart Spencer, executive director of the Lodi Grape Commission as well as owner of the small St. Amant Winery. And, like most young wine regions, Lodi is still experimenting. “It’s noteworthy that we lead California in the diversity of grape varieties,” Spencer says, “with more than 100 different grapes grown commercially. Although grapes were being grown there in the 1800s, the Lodi appellation or AVA was only approved in 1986. It covers more than 100,000 acres of wine grape vineyards located on a fairly flat plain composed of sandy soils. It has seven districts or sub regions, although at present few people talk about them or use them in marketing their grapes or their wineries. Many of the grape growers are from families that have been farmers in Lodi for multiple generations.



LODI AVA

MOKELUMNE RIVER | 85,700 Acres

Low elevation, alluvial fan of the Mokelumne River. Distinctive granitic-based sandy soils. Cool windy climate. Heart of Old Vine Zinfandels.

CLEMENT HILLS | 85,400 Acres

Older soils with volcanic sediments and clasts. Oak savanna and woodland environment. Warmer and wetter climate than neighboring lower elevation areas.

JAHANT | 28,000 Acres

Dissected river terraces, old floodplain deposits, sandy surface soils. Cool breezy climate. Riparian woodland environment.

BORDEN RANCH | 70,000 Acres

Oldest valley floor soils with a different geological composition of the stream deposits. Climate is warmer, wetter and windy due to higher elevation.

SLOUGHHOUSE | 78,800 Acres

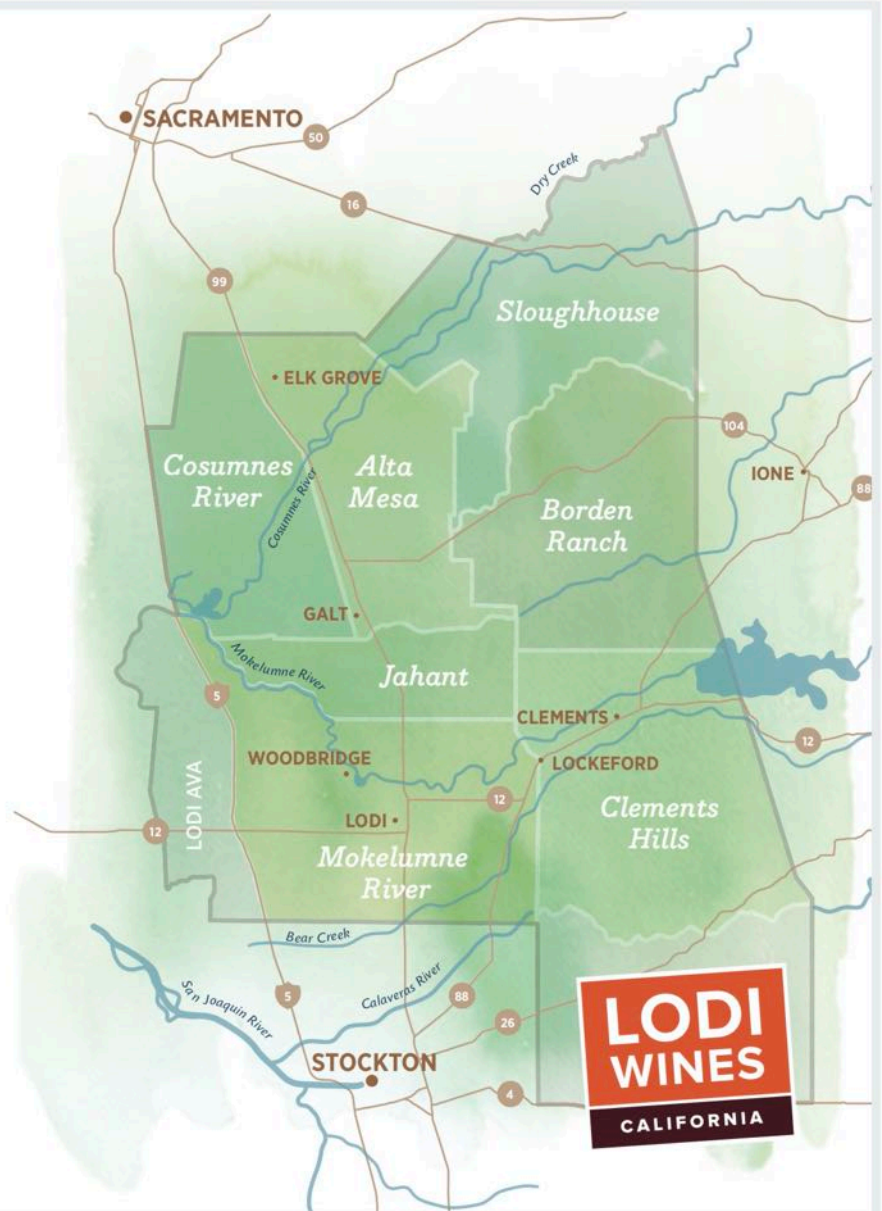
Higher elevation river terraces and low bedrock hills of the Sierra Nevada. Oak savanna environment with older soils. Climate warmer and wetter inland.

ALTA MESA | 55,400 Acres

Heavy, red, clay loam soils. Climate slightly warmer and less windy between than of the lowlands and the foothills. Prairie environment.

COSUMNES RIVER | 54,700 Acres

Low elevation meadows and riparian woodland environments. Cool and windy. Moderate diversity of young soil types along the floodplain and sloughs with patches of intermediate age soils on the river terraces and fans.



LODI WINEGRAPE COMMISSION

Although making wines is a fairly new profession in Lodi, Spencer grew up in a pioneer family. His father Tim, a former dairy farmer, purchased land in 1970 for a vineyard in nearby Amador County, but he planted Portuguese varieties instead of Chardonnay and Cabernet. When the winery that was buying his grapes was about to go bankrupt, Tim Spencer took back his grapes in the form of unsold wine and became a winemaker, eventually relocating in Lodi. When phylloxera wiped out his vineyard he bartered for grapes, giving back a portion of the wine production to the growers. “My dad always seemed to choose the path of most resistance,” Spencer says.

GROWERS TO VINTNERS

While Spencer and his family represent a fairly recent tie to the past, his organization is concentrating on shaping Lodi’s present and future. “Over the past 20 years, Lodi has grown from eight wineries to more than 80 wineries,” he says, “and many of them are owned by growers who have now become vintners.”

For example, the Mettler family, originally from Alsace, has been farming grapes in Lodi since the 1800s, and its Arbor Vineyards owns or manages roughly 2,000 acres, says vineyard manager Jason Eells, who married into the family. In the last part of the 1990s the Mettlers decided to get into the wine business under the Mettler Family brand and released its first wine in 1999. “We grow about 20 different varieties,” Eells says, “but only a small part goes into our winery. We started with about 1,500 cases, and today we make over 20,000.”

The Mettlers, like many other Lodi winemakers, are serious about the diversity of varietal wines. In addition to a few blends, there are eight Mettler varietal wines – Albariño, Muscat Canelli, Pinotage, Aglianico, Mourvedre, Zinfandel,

Petit Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon, varieties originally made famous in four countries of origin in two hemispheres.

Another branch of the Mettler family owns Harney Lane Winery and farms about 600 acres of vineyards along the Mokelumne River. Some of their old vines Zinfandel date back to 1904. In 2006 Harney Lane's owners decided to become winemakers as well, says Kyle Lerner, who manages the family property. "We always joke that (the other Mettler branch) happened to get into the wine business ahead of us and grabbed the family name," Lerner says. "Our first crush produced about 1,000 cases of Harney Lane wine," he says, and it opened a tasting room two years later. "In 2019 we crushed the equivalent of 10,000 cases, all estate grown."

But not all wine made in Lodi is red and not all the winery owners are multi-generation Lodites. Sue Tipton moved to Lodi in 2000 when her husband's job took him there to build a warehouse for Sutter Home, and the two of them decided to stay. "We bought a vineyard property in 2002 which had some Zinfandel vines," Tipton says, "but I loved

Rhone whites." So she decided to plant white grapes – about 12 acres in all – in an area that overwhelmingly grew reds and began making white Rhone varietals and blends under the Acquiesce brand. "When we opened our tasting room in 2012 in a 100-year old barn, people told us we would never make it with only white wines to pour," Tipton says. If the Mettlers have an array of red varietals in their tasting room, Acquiesce can match them with whites – Bourboulenc, Roussanne, Picpoul, Grenache Blanc, Clairette and Viognier. Tipton also makes a sparkling Grenache Blanc, but the closest she comes to a red is her Acquiesce Grenache Rosé. "The number of different varietals is partly because each winery is trying to find a niche," Eells says, "but it's also because the climate can support many different grapes. That and the fact that land is cheap enough in Lodi that you can afford to experiment."

Although Lodi is part of the greater Central Valley, it is at the valley's northern end, and it and the nearby Clarksburg AVA – which includes the Sacramento River Delta – share a cooler climate, if different soils (Clarksburg has more river loam, while Lodi has sandier soils). "We both get the Delta breezes in the evening" coming up from San Francisco Bay, says Aaron Shinn, who oversees about 2,500 acres of vines for Round Valley Ranches, a vineyard management company. "It can be over 100 here during the day, but get down to 55 at night," Shinn says. "The breezes typically start up just before sunset, and they cool the vines and sweep away any mildew spores."

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

While wineries that specialize in Zinfandel, such as Ridge, Ravenswood and Turley, have long shopped for grapes in Lodi, other outsiders are becoming interested in Lodi for its other varieties. For example, Sonoma-based David Ramey is making a Lodi Kerner

varietal under his Sidebar label with a Lodi designation on the bottle. Others have targeted Lodi as a source of less-expensive Cabernet Sauvignon. And the move by Ramey and others to feature the word "Lodi" shows that progress is being made in overcoming one of Lodi's problems that has nothing to do with climate or terroir – its reputation for producing only bulk wine grapes.

Seeing "Lodi" on an old-vine Zinfandel was never a problem, because Zinfandel has always been thought of as a somewhat rustic grape that signaled, in a positive way, California's winemaking past. "Old Vines" cemented that image. Today's challenge is to regularly see "Lodi" on labels for other varieties and blends that carry a \$30, \$50 or \$75 upscale price tag. "Twenty years ago, seeing 'Lodi' on the label was a negative," Spencer says, "but, to be truthful, most people outside the industry don't even know where Lodi is." In short, he believes, the word "Lodi" on a label may have very little effect, positive or negative, with consumers, especially younger ones who have less allegiance to Napa and Sonoma than do baby boomers.



By the same token, multi-generational growers are not living in the past, instead welcoming new ideas and newcomers. “Growers by and large believe in that old saying, ‘A rising tide raises all ships,’” Tipton says. “When we moved here I found that people were super supportive. Growers see the possibilities that small wineries are a way to raise Lodi’s profile in a positive way.” As Lodi’s reputation grows, so will the prices growers charge for grapes.

DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER

Plus, there’s another way to view Lodi’s rise in quality and importance as an AVA. That’s because Lodi’s business model is different than many other California regions. “We sell everything out of the tasting room,” says Acquiesce’s Tipton. Harney Lane is equally focused on DTC – direct-to-consumer – as are most of the Lodi wineries. “We’re 95% DTC,” Lerner says. “We’re focused on local, and not the bandwidth.” DTC, whether by wine club or tasting room, also means winegrowers can have a bigger profit margin, as they don’t give a cut to a distributor or need to hire a marketing agency. But as more wineries come online in Lodi and as existing wineries raise production levels, the DTC model needs a growth in tourism to drive sales. Lodi is about 90 minutes by car from San Francisco International via the East Bay and Modesto, not much longer than the stop-and-go drive to Napa during peak period. Sacramento International is less than an hour away.

“We could use more restaurants and better hotels,” Spencer admits, but says in time Lodi may have its gourmet restaurants equivalent to those in Napa’s Yountville. “In fact, Tegan Passalacqua would like to turn Victor into our Yountville,” Spencer says. Passalacqua, who makes wine for Turley and has his own eponymous Passalacqua label, has purchased a house, a vineyard and old meat-processing plant that he is converting into a winery in Victor, a small crossroads village just east of Lodi. And according to many of the Lodi winemaking locals – whether they are old or new blood – the emergence of Lodi as a fine winemaking destination region is just a matter of time. The terroir, the investment capital, the confidence and the energy are all there, they say, and progress is being made at an accelerated rate. Lodi is still some ways from catching up with Napa. But the distance between them is getting shorter.



Update: Winemaker International Amateur Wine Competition Judging still taking place, but delayed

COVID-19 Update: Our 2020 event is still on, but the actual judging will be delayed. Due to concerns with COVID-19 and the safety of our dozens of wine judges and support staff, we are postponing the actual judging of wine entries in the WineMaker International Amateur Wine Competition from mid-April until late June. The thousands of wine entries already received are now stored securely in a climate-controlled warehouse near WineMaker’s office until late June when it will hopefully be safe to assemble the judges and support staff needed for the full weekend of judging.



With our planned WineMaker Competition Awards Dinner no longer taking place on May 30 in San Luis Obispo, California.

We will instead be only using email and social media to first announce the winners. All entrants will still be mailed their judging notes and any winners will also receive their medals and certificates by mail this year.

As a result of this postponement we have reopened accepting wine entries again. The new deadline for wines to arrive will be June 1 if you missed our earlier March 17 date due to the impact of the current health crisis.

Thanks from all of us at WineMaker for your understanding and patience as we work through this quickly changing landscape with the goal of still providing expert feedback from experienced judges on your entries. Your bottles are tucked away safe and sound in climate-controlled comfort until late June. Be safe, be well, and cheers!

New Entry Deadline! ENTER YOUR BEST HOMEMADE WINES, CIDERS, AND MEADS IN THE WORLD’S LARGEST COMPETITION FOR HOBBY WINEMAKERS! PREPARE YOUR ENTRIES NOW! NEW ENTRY DEADLINE: JUNE 1, 2020

<https://www.winemakercompetition.com/>

Portland Winemakers Club

Leadership Team – 2020

President: **Bill Brown** bbgoldieguy@gmail.com

- Establish leadership team
- Assure that objectives for the year are met
- Set up agenda and run meetings

Treasurer: **Barb Thomson** bt.grapevine@frontier.com

- Collect dues and fees, update membership list with secretary
- Pay bills

Secretary: **Ken Stinger** kbstinger@frontier.com

- Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
- Monthly newsletter
- Keep updated list of members, name tags and other data

Chair of Education/Speakers: **Rufus Knapp** Rufus.Knapp@fei.com

- Arrange for speakers & educational content for our meetings

Chair for Tastings: **Paul Sowray & Barb Stinger** davids1898@aol.com
kbstinger@frontier.com

- Conduct club tastings
- Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chair of Winery/Vineyard Tours: **Damon Lopez**. dlopez5011@yahoo.com

- Select wineries, vineyards etc. to visit
- Arrange tours
- Cover logistics (food and money)

Chair of Group Purchases: **Bob Hatt** bobhatt2000@yahoo.com

- Makes the arrangements to purchase, collect, and distribute
- Grape purchases
- Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution

Chair of Competitions: **Paul Boyechko** labmanpaul@hotmail.com

- Encourage club participation in all amateur competitions available. Make information known through Newsletter, e-mail and Facebook.

Chairs for Social Events : **Marilyn Brown & Mindy Bush** brown.marilynjean@gmail.com
* Gala / Picnic / parties mindybush@hotmail.com

Web Design Editor: **Alice Bonham** alice@alicedesigns.org