

PEAY VINEYARDS

SPRING RELEASE

ISSUE 29



WHAT DO I KNOW?

Albert Einstein famously said, “the more I learn, the more I realize I don’t know.” Of course, Einstein knew more about certain areas of science than anyone during his lifetime, but grasping new scientific concepts only revealed more fields for him to explore and doors for him to open. This process is what drove Einstein, and many people who push the limits of understanding in their fields, to work hard, to take risks, to make mistakes (and, for some, to achieve greatness.) Einstein’s saying has been applied to the accretion of wine knowledge, perhaps, in some instances, with a false sense of modesty. It struck a bell with me in early January, however,

when I tasted through some of our older vintages to update our Aging/Drinking Window notes (see updated notes on our web site www.peayvineyards.com).

I first had this realization—that I was ignorant - when I started creating blends with Nick and Vanessa in the spring and summer after our first vintages. When creating blends, the wines are young and full of primary flavors that need time to diminish before the cuvee’s singular personality can come to the fore. Some of these aromas are temporary fermentation flavors that will be gone in a month, some not. Years later, I still have problems ignoring overt aromas like oak, fruit, yogurt, et al. that I know will not be as dominant when I open the wines on release. Only by being “wrong” so many times over the past 15 years have I learned to soften my immediate hedonistic impressions and add my intellectual understanding that this flavor or that aroma will not be there in a year or will marry with another aroma and reveal a characteristic of our vineyard I will recognize and like. Further, a youthful flavor I do not like when the wine is still in barrel may turn out to be an essential characteristic in the finished wine that reveals the wine’s essence. How ironic and wrongheaded that my desired absence of an aroma when in barrel—when no one will drink it but me—will diminish the potential quality of the eventual wine when opened in a few years! This underscores that an intimate relationship with a piece of land, of the various blocks and clones within that piece of land, of the resulting wines made in various conditions over years from that land, is the only way to have any sense for what one can expect from a young wine down the road. Only experience can bring this understanding. It cannot be faked (which is why the jet-setting consulting winemaker who stops in, waves a wand, and makes a blend pronouncement before moving on to the next uber-winery customer never made sense to me.) There is so much noise in young wine, so many precocious variables captured in a singular point in time, anything short of this degree of familiarity is dart-throwing.

When I am writing the tasting notes on finished wine that has been in the bottle for at least 6 to 12 months, I feel like I stand on somewhat firmer ground. My initial impressions are more reliable as the wine will not alter as rapidly as there is less oxygen in contact with the wine in bottle than when in barrel and changes take place at a much slower and predictable rate. I can write with some confidence not only what the wines taste like right now, but also what they *may* taste like in 2, 5, and maybe 10 years down the road. I am better at this now than even 5 years ago because of my experience drinking many Peay wines at various stages in their lifecycles. This can give me a false confidence, however, and even those impressions have not always been accurate. Each vintage imprints our various wines with a “vintage character” that will affect the flavor of the wine throughout its life. But to what degree and in what manner? For how long will it play a more prominent role than the underlying cuvee’s expression? Will it enhance or shape the terroir expression in a way I have not seen before? Can this even be parsed?

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THE 2015 VINTAGE: SPRING RELEASE

The past three vintages 2012, 2013, and 2014 have been tremendous; each bountiful and unique in its expression of our vineyard. All three made wines that were delicious upon release and age-worthy. The 2015 vintage in this release continues this pattern filling me with gratitude as wines from our vineyard are consistently attaining more evolved expressions of Chardonnay, Pinot noir and Syrah with every vintage.

What was 2015 like? For us - right on the edge of the Pacific Ocean - 2015 was not an abnormally hot and short vintage. What, you say, that is not what the press has been saying? It is true, most wineries finished picking their grapes during the warm month of August, the earliest pick dates on record for many. This is true, however, for vineyards located a little further inland or above the cold coastal inversion layer where summer heat persisted unmitigated. But, for our vineyard tucked up against the Pacific Ocean, the dry and relatively warm January led to bud break two and a half weeks earlier than normal and summer was not abnormally hot so the growing season was not that short. We picked throughout September into October, which is early for us, but only because the season started 2 1/2 weeks early. The real weather news of the 2015 vintage for us was the timing of cold and wet weather in May and early June when the vines were in flower. This inhibited fruit set and our yields were down 20-30% depending on the block and variety.

But, how about the wines? *The wines are magnificent.* There is depth of flavor coupled with poise and elegance. Yes, we made much less wine and you will see some wines will sell quickly but so it goes with farming. We are just pleased the wines continue to deliciously capture our vineyard's unique expression with increased refinement every year. One note, now that we have experienced three plentiful vintages, we are able to afford to hold our Syrahs an extra 6 months in our cellar before releasing them. As Nick mentioned in an article last year, this has long been a goal as we recognize our Syrahs taste a little better with more time in the bottle. So, there is not a Peay Syrah in this release. You will be offered the 2014 *Les Titans* in the Fall.

2015 ESTATE VIOGNIER

100 CASES

If you are a fan of Peay Viognier, grab some while it lasts. The Viognier was hit especially hard during flowering and we ended up making about half our normal production. What we made is quite good and in the typical style of Peay Viognier. The nose is high-toned and nuanced with light floral aromas, and chalky and green almond notes. The mouth has medium weight with a linear progression down the tongue finishing with minerally flavors and brisk acidity. Fresh, bright and vibrant, the Viognier will be perfect with spring and summer cuisine.

2015 SONOMA COAST CHARDONNAY

400 CASES

All seven acres of Chardonnay from our estate vineyard were in full production and making excellent wine by 2014 so we were able to reduce the amount of purchased fruit for the 2015 *Sonoma Coast* Chardonnay to about 35% of the blend. This change led to the increased minerality and "Estate" flavor profile of the 2014 *Sonoma Coast* Chardonnay and is evident in the 2015, as well. The alluring and youthful nose of the 2015 emphasizes curd, golden delicious apple, and green banana aromas. I expect these youthful aromas to coalesce and diminish in richness with 1-2 years more in bottle but are quite attractive at this stage of development. The mouth has a silky, slightly oily texture that is round *yet* precise; a quality of Vanessa's winemaking I find singular and extraordinary. The finish emphasizes our *Estate* Chardonnay's mineral (think chalk, lead, stone) profile with excellent acidity and a medium to long finish.

2015 SONOMA COAST PINOT NOIR

650 CASES

As you know, the *Sonoma Coast* Pinot noir is made primarily from barrels that do not go into one of the three estate wines (*Ama*, *Pomarium* and *Scallop Shelf*) during the blending process. We have continued to focus on the estate nature of this wine and have reduced outside fruit sources for the 2015 *Sonoma Coast* to produce a Pinot noir that captures our vineyard's expression, not just the character of the appellation. As a result, the 2015 *Sonoma Coast* is very, very appealing. There is an exotic and heady floral and spice nose with musk, sandalwood, cardamom and cedar aromas. The wine is already quite cohesive with a focused progression from the front of the palate, where the fruit is featured, through the mid-palate, for texture, to the long and clean finish. There is a superb balance of fruit, earth, spice and floral notes. The acidity makes it energetic and not overly-weighted down or ponderous. On the finish, light tannins frame the wine and with 1-2 years more in bottle will soften and resolve. There is a lot of class and refinement at this price point.



2015 SAVOY PINOT NOIR, ANDERSON VALLEY

275 CASES

This is the most exciting *Savoy* Pinot noir we have made. One of the special qualities of *Savoy* is the vineyard's character is evident across producers and vintages, regardless of which blocks wineries buy, which clones they use in their blend, or what winemaking decisions they make (when they pick, oak use, stem inclusion, etc.) Vanessa clearly makes a more "Peay" styled *Savoy* that tends to be lighter on its feet and emphasizes nuance but the pleasing cherry and forest floor qualities of the *Savoy* vineyard still shine, perhaps shine even brighter, in the wine when not over-encumbered by a desire for power.

The 2015 Peay *Savoy* is vivid in character. The restrained nose has cherry but also cranberry and raspberry fruit aromas balanced by copper and forest floor flavors. The mid palate is medium in weight with a long and persistent finish that is not heavy. It is delicious to drink now and will age for another 5+ years but hardly needs more time in the bottle to impress.

2015 POMARIUM ESTATE PINOT NOIR, SONOMA COAST

500 CASES

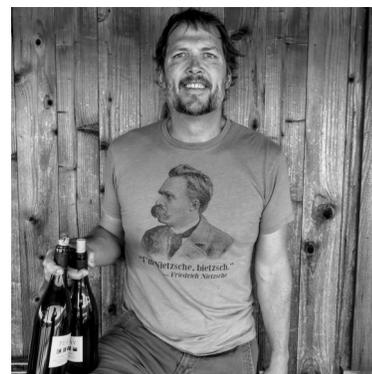
The 2015 *Pomarium* is a gorgeous wine. Starting in the 2014 vintage *Pomarium* has emerged as a refined version of its previous self with more nuance and complexity. This wine above all others we make is getting better and better every year by long strides. For those who know the scent, a character in the nose reminds me of Nag Champa incense (oh c'mon, you have been to a Dead show or head shop before, no?) Nag Champa has sandalwood, high tone floral (the champa flower comes from the Magnolia champaca tree) and sweet spice aromas and I think is what people mean when they say a wine has Indian spice aromas. This character is not overpowering but swirls magnificently around the dense core of fruit and fresh blood sitting deep in the aroma. On the palate all of these impressions are even more immediate. The wine is youthful right now and will benefit from a little time in the bottle to soften and integrate. For those of you who attend our wine dinners, you will see this wine featured often over the coming years as I am saving as much as I can in our library as I think it will be a beauty for years to come.

WHAT DO I KNOW? — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

And, so, I have been wrong on some of my recommendations for when a wine will reach its full potential (as if there were a single moment, anyway) and even more off base on what aromas I expect will be present after 10 years. Thankfully, I have not been *tragically* wrong. In some cases, I thought a wine would come around more quickly and tannins would soften, aromas would integrate sooner, et cetera. This has happened most often with our Syrah which can be gorgeous with 5-7 years of age from vintage but now after drinking the truly magnificent 2005s over the past 6 months I would implore you to wait 11 years from vintage, not the 5 years I said upon release for that wine. But is 11 years long enough for the 2006s? The 2006 Syrahs still seem a touch youthful. Don't get me wrong, they are powerful, meaty, and yummy right now and I have drunk almost all we made and held back but in 5 more years will the fruit further subside and the blood and iron qualities continue to emerge? The 2006 vintage was warmer than 2005 so that accounts for more fruit and muscle and less pepper and snap in the wines but do those aromas lurk underneath the fruit to add further excitement? In other instances, I have been overly conservative. The pinots have come together more quickly than first anticipated. The 2005s and 2006s shed their harder frames and are powerful, gorgeous wines and have been ready to drink for a few years now. But the 09s are still puppies! They need more time. Or maybe not. I have been pouring the 2009s at wine dinners and they are so pleasurable right now perhaps it is a vintage best enjoyed for the vintage character's heady, youthful aromatics. They may never take on aged earth and tea aromas but only quietly diminish in fruit and floral intensity over time?

In the end, I must attach a very large qualifier to all my Aging/Opening recommendations: Almost every one of our wines should taste good upon release. Some need only a few months to a year to mature and for the flavors to coalesce. There is no doubt that when drunk right after release the wines will emphasize singular notes of power, spice and fruit over nuance, earth, and floral aromas. Neither style is "right" or "better." You know what you prefer on any given day, and, if not, try them both. My desire not to choose what is best for you accounts for the long drinking windows in my recommendations. Also, please understand, like the weather man, the further out the predicted drinking window the greater chance I may be—probably am—wildly inaccurate with my forecast. Enjoy the tough work of getting to know more and, in the end, knowing less.

- Andy Peay





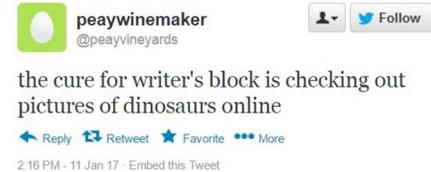
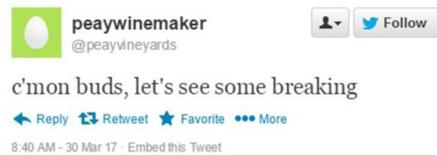
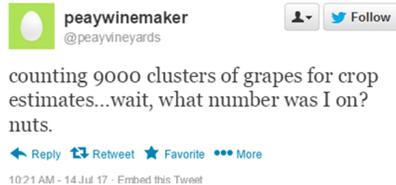
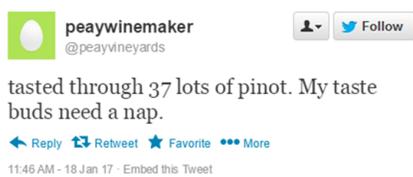
FROM THE HADROSAUR COMES THE MOCKINGBIRD? WINEMAKER VANESSA WONG

Baryonyx, Rhamphorhynchus, Pachycephalosaur. These are dinosaur names that have become part of my current parlance in order to have engaging conversation with my 5 year old. I don't recall from the time I was a kid the dinosaur names being so complicated, or so long and hard to pronounce, let alone impossible to remember. All I remember were the "basic" dinosaurs like Stegosaurus, Brontosaurus and, of course, Tyrannosaurus rex. And now paleontologists don't even use the name Brontosaurus anymore, opting for the Apatosaurus taking nomenclature precedent since they were found to be the same dinosaur. Alas, "Apatosaurus burgers" just doesn't have the same ring to it as the old Flintstones' "Bronto Burgers."

Although I cannot say that I could explain the difference between a sauropod and a theropod, I am enjoying learning about dinosaurs all over again. There are so many things I am discovering. For instance, I always thought that the various dinosaurs roamed the planet at about the same time not really realizing the Jurassic and the Cretaceous periods were 70 million years apart—so no epic predator and prey battles to the death between Stegosaurus and T. Rex like in film reels of my imagination. Several mass extinctions snuffed out each epoch of prehistoric life so these creatures would have never crossed paths. I have to say, I feel sort of sorry for those big dinosaurs. Imagine you're a brachiosaurus minding your own Jurassic business, lumbering around in your massive body, foraging tasty cycads in your own post-Pangaeal tectonic plate when, BLAMO!, an asteroid hits or a volcano blows up unalterably changing your familiar landscape and you cannot adapt to survive and die out. Darn it, what good is a thunderously, immense body if you have a brain the size of a walnut?

I admit I am feeling a bit like a dinosaur these days, especially when it comes to this social media thing. I stuck my toe in the water and started a Facebook account years ago but quickly found it a little overwhelming, with folks you kind-of-sort-of-know contacting you and trying to keep up with all the incoming newsflashes. This is a typical scenario in my social media life. Something happens to me that is amusing or cute so I take a nifty picture. For a fleeting moment I think, "I could post this to Facebook". But I cannot think of anything to say about it at that moment. Three weeks pass and I think to myself, "Well, no one will want to see a month old picture" which then evolves into "who the heck would want to know what is going on with my daily comings and goings anyway?" Inevitably, nothing ever gets posted to my semi-defunct wall. People wonder if I Instagram or if I do Delectable. Sure, I could photograph labels of crazy wines I drink but what else would I share with this pictorial musing other than imbibing and typing on a teeny phone keyboard is not advisable?

And don't even talk to me about Twitter. Sure, even our new chief at the Oval Office has demonstrated the power of harnessing this medium to intimate to millions of people a myriad of random thoughts and sentiments. But I can't think of what I might want to say to even 5 people all at once, let alone some thousand or a million people. If I were to tweet, it might look like something like this:



So, although every vintage is inherently different, I imagine that my quotidian musings might all start to repeat themselves as grapegrowing and winemaking is a cycle that goes through an annual pattern. And if I distilled it down to fewer than 140 characters, my snapshot of each moment in the cycle might appear to be identical to the previous year and that one similar to the year before that. Yet, with every vintage we gain a new insight into our vineyard and how the grapes grow and respond to the various elements of that vintage. And with each passing vintage we take this knowledge and make small but measured changes ever-improving the quality and the expression of terroir in farming our vines and vinifying our wines. What better, more succinct way to broadcast my impression of the cycle of seasons of our

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UPCOMING 2017 DINNERS & EVENTS

Spring Release Group 1	SF, CA	2/1	Announced via email
Spring Release Groups 2 & 3	SF, CA	2/3	Announced via email
Spring Release Groups 4 & 5	SF, CA	2/7	Announced via email
Frenchman's Creek Country Club—members only	Palm Beach, FL	2/13	
Haven Wine Dinner	Tampa, FL	2/16	813.258.2233
Tawla Wine Dinner	SF, CA	3/1	415.814.2704
Red Feather Wine Dinner	Cincinnati, OH	3/7	513.407.3631
Cleveland Event—TBD	Cleveland, OH	3/9	
Cleveland Event—TBD	Cleveland, OH	3/10	
Miller Union Wine Dinner	Atlanta, GA	3/21	678.733.8550
High Museum Wine Auction	Atlanta, GA	3/23-25	
Loring Place Dinner	NY, NY	4/4	Details announced in February
Ninety Acres at Natirar Wine Dinner	Far Hills, NJ	4/6	www.natirar.com/ninety_acres
Ad Hoc Whole Hog Dinner	Yountville, CA	4/26	To be announced in March
Spring Open House Party at Peay Winery	Cloverdale, CA	5/6	
PA Wine Dinner TBA	Philadelphia, PA	5/9	To be announced in March
Heart's Delight Wine Auction Weekend	Washington D.C.	5/10-13	
DC Wine Dinner TBA	Washington D.C.	5/11	To be announced in March
Outstanding in Occidental—West Sonoma Coast Dinner	Occidental, CA	5/20	www.outstandinginthefield.com
Meals on Wheels Auction Fundraiser—San Francisco	SF, CA	5/21	
The Morris Wine Dinner	SF, CA	6/7	To be announced in March
Sun Valley Center for the Arts Wine Auction	Sun Valley, ID	7/20-22	
Charleston & Kiawah Events—TBD	Charleston, SC	8/23-24	To be announced in June
Peay Dinner at Foggy River Farm	Santa Rosa, CA	8/26	To be announced in June

vineyard on the far West Sonoma Coast than through the wine itself? Sometimes it is hard to articulate with words what one could convey in the crafting of a wine: a year of weather, a year of worry, a year of care and devotion. What more could be imparted in a casual tweet? I earnestly hope that a wine can express something that 140 characters cannot.

So, I hope that being a social media dinosaur will not cause me to go the way of the dinosaur, that is to say, extinct. Small but particular evolutionary adaptations gave certain species the advantage to survive and thrive as the environment changed for the dinosaurs just like we strive to excel in the quality and expression of our wines from one vintage to the next vintage. I might point out that birds evolved from a group of dinosaurs known as maniraptoran theropods - generally small meat-eating dinosaurs that include Velociraptor of Jurassic Park fame. Rocks from the last part of the Cretaceous period have started to yield the remains of early shore-birds, ducks, and other more familiar birds. Their descendants are the true heirs of the magnificent dinosaurs that ruled the Earth tens of millions of years ago. So there you have it: not extinct, just evolved. Makes me want to tweet like a... dinosaur!

*Tra la la, tweedle dee dee dee
It gives me a thrill
To wake up in the morning
To the mockingbird's trill*

*Tra la la tweedle dee dee dee
There's peace and good will
You're welcome as the flowers
On Peay Vineyard hill!**

* (adapted from an excerpt of *Mockingbird Hill* by Les Paul and Mary Ford circa 1950. If you know this song then perhaps you are a dinosaur!)



FOOL-PROOF & DELICIOUS RECIPES FOR THOSE WITH LITTLE ONES & LITTLE TIME

Despite the somewhat lengthy, multi-step recipes often featured in our newsletter, I usually have about 30 minutes to cook something flavorful and nutritious for my two young boys, my wife and me. I start prepping at 6 p.m. and we eat at 6:30 p.m. This means I sauté, grill, and roast at very high heat. Despite fairly adventurous palates—at times, nothing is consistent from one day to the next with kids, I have learned—I cannot get too creative and mingle too many ingredients in a dish. So these recipes are our family favorite recipes for our customers who are busy parents. Those of you with loads of time to cook during the week? Well, I am lurid green with envy. For the rest of you, a quick bon appétit.

Roasted Curried Romanesco and Sautéed Rainbow Chard

Romanesco, a member of the brassicas family, is crunchier, nuttier and more delicate in flavor than its cousins cauliflower and broccoli. The shape is also a fractal which makes it look like a diamond-shaped drill bit (and really cool). On the West Coast I find this vegetable almost year round—organic and locally -grown, of course—but the fall and winter is the most popular time for it in stores.



To Prepare: Heat the oven to 425 degrees. Cut the romanesco into separate florets and slice each floret in half lengthwise so there is a flat surface and place in a large bowl. Add olive oil, yellow curry powder, and mix to coat. Spread florets—flat surface down—on a sheet pan, sprinkle with kosher rock salt, and place in the oven. Cook for 20 minutes or until the down side is caramelized (brown to black). If I have the time I like to go an extra 5-10 minutes as I wish to not only caramelize the pan surface but also crisp the top surface. While preparing the romanesco, chop the chard across the leaf and stalk (perpendicular to the stalk) into 1" x 2" bite sizes. Place the chard into a hot pan with a little olive oil and roughly chopped fresh garlic and sauté for 3-5 minutes, maybe adding a little chicken stock if you have it. When the romanesco is finished, toss it with the sautéed chard and serve adjusting the salt and adding a little black pepper to taste. Add toasted pine nuts, if desired.

Kale Chips

My boys eat a whole head of kale—each—if it is baked. If I sauté it and add cranberries and toasted nuts? Nyet hemhoro. So, I bake it.

To Prepare: Buy large, dark green, lacinato (aka dino) kale. Needless to say organic and locally-sourced kale is tastier (can we just take that as a given so I will not repeat it for every recipe?) Heat the oven to 425 degrees. Devein the leaves by folding the leaf in half and ripping out the spine/stalk or use a pair of scissors and neatly cut out the tough spine. I use spray olive oil from a can as it coats evenly but you can also brush each leaf with olive oil. Lay the leaves flat on a sheet pan and salt. Roast for 15-20 minutes keeping an eye on the leaves as you want them to crisp and dry out but not blacken. If you are like me, you will burn every third batch, akin to toasting pine nuts in the oven while attempting to prep other dishes. Take them out of the oven, adjust the salt to taste, and pile them high on a plate. Warning, your kids (and/or you) will make a mess as the crisp nature of the kale leaves causes them to explode upon contact with your mouth.

Pan-seared Onglet (Hanger) Steak

Hanger steak is a cut from the “hanging” lower belly of the cow, part of the diaphragm, and a more tender and flavorful cut than the skirt steak which makes up the remaining portion. It is called the Butcher’s cut because the butcher knows what the best cut is and I could not agree more. There is a very tough, inedible membrane that runs down the middle so be sure your butcher removes it first before selling it to you. Not all do, which amazes me. Stop going to that butcher. I did.

To Prepare: Even if you minimize salt intake, unless it is life or death, season the steak with *a lot* of rock salt and cracked black pepper. Do you have a cast iron pan? I could not recommend them more highly. I cook everything in a cast iron pan and for this cut it is essential. Heat a cast iron pan to a very high heat. It is not necessary to have fat in the pan if it is a well-seasoned pan though this is a low fat cut so you could add a little bacon fat or some butter so you get a nice crust on the steak. Cook 3-5 minutes on each side. I use a bacon press or small pan as a weight to help create the crust. Add a little white wine to the pan and quickly scrape up the bits stuck to the pan (i.e. deglaze the pan). Then cover the pan to allow the steak to steam for a few minutes and for the center to rise in temperature. Be careful not to overcook (index finger and thumb soft) as Hanger steak is best when it is almost rare. The texture should be soft, but unlike filet mignon the flavor is deep and rich. You can sauté mushrooms and make a red wine and butter sauce or just go with the pan juices. I promise this will make your kids happy—they like beef—as there is no “gross” fat to cut off for them and the texture is soft, not chewy. And you, too, will be happy as it is the best cut on the cow (well, except maybe the fatty rib eye...)

