

Orangewood Wines

Small Wineries, Great Wines

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Introduction

No sooner had I declared the end of the fire season with the arrival of 3/4 inch of rain last month, than we got the hottest driest and most fiery August in history. Sorry, I'll be more careful. This month Leslie makes the case for support of smaller businesses.

Small Business

Portfolio Notes - by Leslie Zellmer

Orangewood Wines has been in business for 19 years. At the core of our business are the relationships we create on both ends of the wine distribution channel: At one end: wineries, importers and suppliers. At the other end: restaurants, bars and retail shops. What small businesses like these and Orangewood bring to communities is friendship, authenticity, the sharing of culture, employment opportunities and the identity of a community.

Our supplier partners in the U.S. and around the world work to curate unique offerings that focus on quality over quantity. Independent restaurants and retail outlets are where these smaller brands are found, as opposed to large chain retailers or restaurant chains. This is because large establishments have the same set of offerings at each location, even from state to state. This model of uniformity requires wines with large scale production. In wine, as in most things when you scale up, you sacrifice quality and character. For example, grapes are harvested by machine, rather than by hand, the resulting wine does not have a sense of place or authenticity and loses any nuance it may have had.

Now, more than ever, it is important to evaluate where we spend our dollars. Spending your money at a local small business keeps more money in the community, about four times more. The pandemic is making it exceedingly difficult for small businesses to survive in our state and country. Wineries and restaurants had been closed and are now open to operate either outdoors or at limited capacity depending on the local guidelines. For many, the cost to do business with the restrictions necessary to mitigate risk and spread of the virus, is far greater than their ability to be profitable.

I urge each of you to ponder this when you are making your purchasing decisions. Buy your wine at a local restaurant or retail shop and choose something they recommend. You will be helping perpetuate diversity in your

future options by keeping smaller wineries and distributors as well as your local shops and restaurants in business. These small choices make a big impact.

The Rambler

At mid summer in Cave Creek it is light by 4:30 in the morning. Laurie and I roll out of bed to tend to the horses – whose sense of time is primarily driven by the sun. Sun comes up, time to eat. We give them breakfast, clean their pens (scoop the poop), put on fly masks (flies do not fly by night) and prepare hay nets for the day. Our Black Labrador, Lucy, mostly waits patiently through this process, knowing that her morning walk will be next. After that comes coffee and breakfast for Laurie, Lucy and me.



A month ago, first light was 5:00; we still woke up at 4:30. Then we had time for a cup of coffee before starting horse duties. Now first light is 5:30, giving us time for a second cup of coffee and a chance to do other things – like write part of the Newsletter! By the winter solstice, we will be able to get up a little later and have breakfast

before there is enough light to deal with the horses and take Lucy for a walk. Then the process reverses as the days get longer, and we adapt our routine week by week.

At Orangewood we have more of a weekly cycle. Monday is the start of the week, and that afternoon at 1:00 is the time of our Sales Team meeting. We used to have a physical meeting at Uncorked – the Unpretentious Wine Bar on Scottsdale Road just north of Frank Lloyd Wright Boulevard. (The intersection is marked by a strange tower which is a 50% scale version of a tower that Frank had designed for his hoped-for Arizona State Capitol building.) The meetings were attended primarily by the folks living in the Phoenix area, though we could occasionally entice the Tucson, Prescott and Flagstaff folks along, too. We would taste wines to learn. Learn about a winery, learn about a vintage change, learn about a varietal. At the beginning of the meeting someone would bring a wine in a carafe to challenge our ability to identify region, varietal and winery. I am good at identifying colour. Often we had visitors from wineries, here to share the story of their winery and its people. (The picture includes Yamhill Winery winemaker Ariel Eberle and Jack Jeleko of Partners Wine.)



Things have changed. We still have our meeting, but we attend by means of technology. Much is the same. Someone has a carafe and we try to

guess the wine from their descriptions of it. We still learn about wines for the same reasons. We still have winery visitors, though they don't have to fly here to attend. Some things are different; most meetings are attended by the whole team. Everyone is equal in terms of how hard it is to get to the meeting. We sometimes even have people attending from out of state (Lisa) and on an Interstate Highway (Caroline).

Where am I rambling to here, I ask myself. "Self where are you going?" I don't have to be going anywhere. My point, if I had a point, would be now, more than ever in our lifetimes, we don't know how things will turn out. That does not mean we need to be unhappy. Enjoy the moment: walking with Laurie and Lucy, preparing dinner, savouring the wine, talking to your friends, writing a newsletter...

As James Taylor sang "The secret of life is enjoying the passage of time."

The Rambler is really wandering off today!

Cheers,

Richard and Laurie
Orangewood Wines

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