

# Orangewood Wines

*Small Wineries, Great Wines*

## Orangewood Wines' Newsletter

Volume 4 Issue 24 November 22, 2012

### Introduction

I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving and are looking forward to the holidays. It's hard to believe we're nearly in December.

This last month we had an exciting time loading up our customers in anticipation of Thanksgiving and the upcoming holidays. To put this in perspective, we sold more wine in one week than in the first 15 months of our existence. However, there is still nervousness about the economy. The coming couple of weeks will show whether consumers have the same confidence as our retailers and restaurateurs - buying and drinking that wine and allowing reordering up the supply chain. Ladies and gentlemen, reach for your cork screws!

### Box Score

New Restaurants:	2
New Retail Outlets /Wine Bar	1
New Sales People	0
New Wineries/Importers	0

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### New Restaurants

#### [Shugrue's Hillside Grill](#)

671 Highway 179  
Sedona, AZ 86336  
(928) 282-5300

#### [Tavelino Ristorante Italiano](#)

2890 East Skyline Drive,  
Tucson, AZ 85718  
(520) 531-1931

## **New Retail Outlets/Wine Bars**

### **J's Cigar Bar**

2038 McCulloch Boulevard North

Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403

(928) 680-2655

## **Wine Topic of the Month – Tasting Barrels**

Jim Wallace and I were looking around for a topic this month. He found this article written by Sonoma Wine Maven Millie Howie. She started serious wine tasting when she was 54 years old – there is hope for all of us. You can read more about her [here](#).

But the point of the article is to let you know there is more to cooperage than American or French oak barrels. There are forests and drying times and toasting. Here is her article - enjoy!

Whenever someone mentions they are going to a barrel tasting, some wag is sure to warn them not to get splinters in their teeth. Ha ha. Even the funny-folk know that barrel tastings are really investigations of how wine still in the barrel is progressing, and it is the wine you taste. However, the phrase "barrel tasting" took on a different meaning for the 50 or so winemakers from all over the north coast wine region who attended the recent Mendocino Cooperage Open House. While there was an array of eight glasses containing wine lined up at each place at the long tables, only two wines being tasted: a 1995 chardonnay from the Beckstoffer vineyard in Mendocino County, and a 1994 cabernet sauvignon from Brian Schmidt's vineyard in Dry Creek Valley. The flavor differences amongst the wines were caused not by soil, or climate, or grape clone, but by the barrels and treatment of the barrels used in producing the wine.

One of the two samples of chardonnay had been pulled from a barrel made from wood grown in the national forests in the center of France: Loche, Chateauroux, Jupilles and Troncais. The other had spent its life in a barrel made of stave wood selected from hardwood forests in southern Minnesota, western Wisconsin and northern Iowa. When the wine was made, both of the wood varieties had been air-dried and cured for 24 months. The French wood barrel was fired for 35 minutes, the U. S. wood barrel, 45 minutes. The longer firing of the U. S. wood, said Keith Roberts, Master Cooper, is because "American oak is more dense than French, and so we tone down the heat and lengthen the process." Both chardonnays were very nice. My own palate liked the influence of the wood from the Midwest. The six glasses of cabernet were set up to show the impact that aging and firing have on the wood. All the wines had been in the barrels for about a year. Three of the glasses of cabernet, all from French wood barrels, illustrated the difference the length of firing time can make. All three barrels were made at the same time by the same person from wood aged and seasoned for 24 months. The first glass was from a barrel which had spent only 30 minutes over the fire. The next, forty minutes, and the third, 50 minutes. There were discernible differences between the taste of the three offerings. The third was quite smoky and, while not unpleasant, was definitely not a style of wine I would purchase.

The next three cabernets, all resting in American wood, demonstrated how various lengths of wood-curing time can contribute flavor nuances to the wine. All three of these barrels were given a medium toasting of about 40 minutes. Wood for the first barrel had been air-dried and cured for only 11 months. The next was an example in wood cured for 24 months, which is the standard for stave wood at Mendocino Cooperage. The third barrel was constructed of wood aged 32 months. One alert young winemaker, who is doing his own experiments with barrels made by the Cooperage, asked if they had any barrels for sale made from the 32-month wood. The answer is no. For their own use the home winery, Fetzer, prefers the effect of the wood aged 24 months, as do most of their customers. To tie up stacks and stacks of stave wood for nearly another year is not considered feasible, nor advantageous. Nearly all of the American oak comes from Norbert Staggemeyer of Caledonia, MN, where he has been supplying staves for bourbon barrels for 38 years. He gets his northern white oak logs from mills who set logs back for him to check over and make his selections. All the logs come from within 100 miles of his operation from privately owned timberland. Mendocino Cooperage buys staves 1-1/2" thick, although they have been experimenting with some thinner staves, particularly for a 70-gallon barrel they have designed for their own use. If you ever have an invitation to visit a cooperage, be sure to do it. It is noisy, but the scent of freshly planed wood, and the aroma of the barrels toasting, along with the almost leisurely pace of production, is more than worth the trip.

## Rambling

Last weekend I found myself in Tulsa, Oklahoma wearing running shoes, shorts and shirt. Fortified with a bagel, I was about to begin a half marathon with my son and some of his friends. Those of you who made it this far in last month's newsletter were aware that I had been training for this run since the heat of the summer dropped sufficiently. Despite a painful Achilles tendon, which I attributed to ramping up my mileage too quickly, I am giving the actual race a shot. Fortunately, adrenalin and "Vitamin I" had me in good enough shape to finish. My race plan was to start slow and fade. I executed it perfectly! I completed the race at a 12:09 minutes per mile pace for a time of 2:39:09. Slower than last time, but enough to qualify for the pizza and beer event immediately following!

The Rambler rambles on...

Richard (newsletter writer), Laurie (editor) and Jim Wallace (another writer and editor)  
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