

# Orangewood Wines

*Small Wineries, Great Wines*

## Orangewood Wines' Newsletter

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### Introduction

The summer is here, and Laurie and I are preparing for our tri-annual raft trip through the Grand Canyon. For the next week, our ability to respond to phone calls, texts and emails drops to zero. This is quite shocking - in a good way for us.

Last month's topic was Relationships and, in particular, good communication. For this month's topic, Jim Wallace, our sometime editor, contributor, salesman emeritus and wine consumer, has been dusting off some old files. He came across this one written by Pat Fegan, whom he has known many years. Pat is now runs the [Chicago Wine School](#). Jim tells me that Pat would be happy to see this in our Newsletter. Good work with the dusting Jim.

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### New Customers

**Hoppy Grape** <http://sedonawineandbeerco.com/>

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## **New Wineries - Titus Vineyards**

Beginning in 1968, Lee and Ruth Titus began buying vineyards in the heart of Napa Valley. They focused on Bordeaux varietals and sold them to wineries. In 1990 their son, Phillip Titus, who was (and is) winemaker at Chappellet Winery, made the first Titus wines from their grapes. The winery has expanded since then, with brother, Eric, managing the vineyards and business. In addition to Cabernet Sauvignon, the focus is on Zinfandel and Sauvignon Blanc. There are other varietals grown, including Cabernet Franc and Petite Sirah, aimed primarily at augmenting the Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel, respectively, but also available in limited quantities as single varietals.

Titus falls into that size of winery, 5,000 - 15,000 cases per year, which is large enough to be supplied through larger distributors, but not large enough to have any leverage with those distributors. Having seen their distributor be absorbed into one of the "big boys", they found they were getting lost in a large portfolio. They searched for an alternative - in Arizona that would be us.

## **Wine Topic of the Month: Petite Sirah/Durif**

Most folks don't realize it, but most of the grapevines we know and love are plants that, without any aid by humans, are the result of sex in the wild. Cabernet Sauvignon, for example, is a natural cross pollination of two plants of the same species: Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Franc. The tryst twixt Pinot Noir and Gouais resulted in Chardonnay.

Hundreds or thousands of years after these natural matings, human beings came along and played vine yentas. We intentionally crossed same species varieties and got new crosses. Why? Compromise! Want a grape that will do well in a warm climate but still retain some class? Looking for a grape that smells something like a thoroughbred but can be picked before the bad weather sets in?

Probably the most famous of the reds is Petite Sirah. It's a cross of the classic Syrah grape with the very much lesser known variety called Peloursin. It was found in the experimental nursery of a Dr. Durif in southern France. Most (75%) of the 11,000 or so acres of it are planted in California. There are about 1,100 acres of it in Australia, where they call it Durif. México and Chile each have about 500 acres, and there are patches in Israel, South Africa and Brazil. You might find an Australian Durif here or there, but you are much more likely to find a California Petite Sirah.

Petite Sirah, or Durif, tend toward the vividly dark, sometimes blue-black color. They're not known for much varietal character on the nose: usually you'll get more the smell of the oak. On the palate they are rich and usually full-bodied and smooth: great wintertime reds.

Pat Fegan

[Chicago Wine School](#)

## Rambling

Every three years Robert organizes a week long raft trip through the Grand Canyon. Given the few thousand people who have been to the bottom of the Canyon, compared to the millions who peer down from the top, I feel privileged to make it. Usually the trips occur around the time of a full moon, this year there will be a new moon - which means it will be extra dark and many stars visible in stunning clarity. Which reminds me of the story that I told in 2008. <http://orangewoodwines.com/Newsletters/Orangewood%20Wines%20-%203.17.pdf>.

Each trip we try to have three sessions of tasting, learning and inebriation. This trip is no different. For the sessions I am taking selections of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Cabernet Sauvignon. In addition we take some Sangiovese and Grenache - for recreational consumption.

The Rambler rafts onward...

Cheers,

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

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