

# AUTUMN 2024 TASTING NOTES

## WINE SELECTIONS BY CLUB

### 2019 GSM

Gold | Platinum | Concierge

### 2018 Petite Sirah

Gold | Platinum | Concierge

### 2017 Barbera

Gold | Platinum

### 2018 Aglianico

Gold

### 2017 Mourvèdre

Concierge

### 2019 Cabernet Franc

Gold

### 2019 Sagrantino

Platinum

### 2019 Tannat

Platinum

### 2017 Aglianico

Concierge

### 2018 Barbera

Concierge

### 2019 Syrah

Concierge

# AMPHORA WINERY



## *The benchmark and inspiration*

The incomparable wines of France's Rhône River valley are among winemaker Rick's very favorite wines, and his benchmark for the art of crafting blends that are greater than the sum of their parts. In the picture above, Rick is exploring a vineyard in *Châteauneuf-du-Pape*, in the southern Rhône Valley. It is here that red wines comprised of widely varying blends of Cinsault, Counoise, **Grenache**, **Mourvèdre**, Muscardin, Piquepoul Noir, **Syrah**, Terret noir, and Vaccarèse are made into some of the most complex and interesting wines anywhere—and serve as the inspiration for Amphora **GSM**. In *Châteauneuf*, most of the blends are based on Grenache, and so too is our GSM. We hope you enjoy Rick's homage to these great, historic vineyards.

*Cheers!*

## 2019 GSM | SONOMA COUNTY

196 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2030



### 65% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 15% Mourvèdre

The incomparable wines of France's Rhône River valley are among wine-maker Rick's very favorite wines, and his benchmark for the art of crafting blends that are greater than the sum of their parts. Since Rick's first GSM (in 2012), this delicious blend has proven to be both a staff and guest favorite every vintage. The 2019 vintage is dark and spicy, with the predominant Grenache component contributing terracotta notes from its time in clay. Syrah anchors the blend, with tannic structure, dark fruit flavors, and weight. The Mourvèdre adds to the complexity with its meaty and violet aromas, and ample structure. All together, the 2019 is a bit bigger and sturdier than the 2018, and in the Old-World style, it is 'drinking young' even after three years in the bottle. This wine will shine with dishes featuring bold Mediterranean flavors: garlic, lemon, rosemary, and olive...

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*"I have lived temperately-I double the doctor's recommendation of a glass and a half of wine a day, and even treble it with a friend"*

**-Thomas Jefferson**

## 2018 PETITE SIRAH | BEVILL/WOLCOTT VINEYARD

99 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2034

The Bevill /Wolcott vineyard is situated literally three driveways south of the winery, on the Dry Creek benchlands. We've enjoyed the consistency and quality of the fruit from this vineyard since the 2006 vintage. The consistent attributes of this Petite Sirah are sweet and spicy aromatics, abundant dark fruit flavors, and the structure to develop in the bottle for years to come. Aromas of violet, black peppercorn, and vanilla greet you, and are followed by ripe blackberry and dark plum flavors. The finish lingers with a hint of sassafras (i.e., a hint of root beer), especially pronounced with extended bottle-aging. A classic pairing would be a grilled rib-eye steak, but this is also enjoyable with rich, soft-ripened cheeses, or sautéed mushrooms served over creamy polenta.

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## 2017 BARBERA | CLARKSBURG

224 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2027

This vintage expresses the more subtle aspects of a varietal known for dark color, and fruit-forward flavors. This vineyard consistently presents a delicious combination of savory notes and dark fruit character, and our 2017 is no exception. Aromas of cherry compote, clove and mushroom greet you in the glass. The wine is bright and lively, with a lighter body than some of the previous vintages, and a solid emphasis on red fruits. The loamy, savory aspect typical of this site is present, with the counterpoint of tart cherry. The mouth-feel carries a nice brightness and moderate tannins round out the profile. This wine could pair well with tomato-based dishes, and work with the bold flavors of garlic and Mediterranean herbs.

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## 2019 CABERNET FRANC | DRY CREEK VALLEY

94 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2034

This is our second vintage of Cab Franc grown on the heights of Bradford Mountain, on the west side of Dry Creek Valley. The wine showcases the intensity of mountain-grown grapes with concentrated dark fruit character, spiced with characteristic Cabernet Franc notes of cedar and chaparral. The overall impression is rich and chocolatey, with the riper aspects and dark blackcurrant/blackberry fruit taking center stage, with the green notes typical of this variety woven in seamlessly. The 2018 was great, but this one is even better! Food pairings that come to mind include grilled lamb kebabs seasoned with thyme, or *farinata*\* with a nice plucking of fresh rosemary.

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\*For a great *farinata* article and recipe, scan this QR code,  
or see:

<https://www.seriousseats.com/farinata-italian-chickpea-pancake-recipe>



*BEST of CLASS, Harvest Terroir Challenge 2023*

DOUBLE Gold, *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition 2023*

Gold, *Sunset International Wine Competition 2023*

## 2017 MOURVÈDRE | CLARKSBURG

144 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2025

Mourvèdre often presents a wild range of flavors and aromas, with meaty and animalistic notes nestled amidst spicy aspects, and dark fruit underlying it all. Our 2017, just like the 2016, features more of the sweet and spicy side of the spectrum. It greets you with lovely aromas of Darjeeling tea, with a hint of black pepper. The red berry flavors are juicy, and invite a second sip. The wine is medium in weight, with just enough tannic structure to carry it for a few more years, and to play well with food. Try this one with a mushroom-centric dish, or roast pork with a cherry glaze.

LIST PRICE 35

## 2019 SAGRANTINO | SONOMA COUNTY

117 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2040

This is Amphora's first vintage of this rare and mysterious Italian varietal. Sagrantino originates in central Italy's Umbria region, and while there are small plantings elsewhere throughout the winemaking world, nowhere is it common.

Even in its homeland, there are probably less than 500 acres of it planted. For comparison, consider that there are 95,000 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon planted... just in California! This is a big, deep wine: blue-black in color, with a concentrated blackberry fruit character with dark chocolate hints, and a very sturdy tannic structure. In fact, Sagrantino is inherently one of the most tannic red varietals. Rick's decades of experience crafting another inherently tannic varietal (Petite Sirah) with balance and finesse served well in nurturing his first Sagrantino. If you open this wine now, it will benefit from some aeration, and will shine with hearty fare. It will undoubtedly reward aging!



LIST PRICE 58

## 2017 AGLIANICO | CLARKSBURG

92 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2030

Of all the Italian varietals we produce, our Aglianico is perhaps the most “Italianate” in character. In this wine, the fruit flavors are subordinate to the structure: fine-grained tannins let the wine stay present while mingling with rich foods, and the red fruit flavors show more on the finish, than on the entry. Aging in *amphorae* gives a subtle minerality to the mouth feel, and the aromas evoke sandalwood and wet stone. The flavors are a blend of red currant and black cherry, and the overall impression is complex and interesting. Try this with sliced fennel bulb dipped in extra-virgin olive oil, tomato bruschetta, or sweet Italian sausage.

LIST PRICE 40



## 2018 BARBERA | CLARKSBURG

245 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2029

This is an elegant rendition of Barbera, with a little less of the characteristic earthy terroir of this particular vineyard, and more of a leafy black tea and tart red berry impression. In the old days, Barbera was prized for retaining nice acidity even in warmer growing regions, and this wine is reflective of that, with a bright juicy mouthfeel. The medium weight and subtle tannins enhance its food-friendly nature. This wine could pair well with tomato-based dishes such as pasta in red sauce, or that classic of Autumn simplicity - tomato soup with grilled cheese sandwiches.

LIST PRICE 36



## 2018 AGLIANICO | CLARKSBURG

241 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2034

Once again, a wine that shows more “Old World” character than New. In this wine, the fruit flavors are subordinate to the structure: fine-grained tannins let the wine stay present while mingling with rich foods, and the red fruit flavors show more on the finish, than on the entry. In this 2018 vintage, the aging in *amphorae* lends a decided “grip” to the mouth feel, and a stony finish. This is a dark and juicy glass of wine, with a dark and brambly fruit character, and just hint of the balsamic aromas of a cabinetry shop. It is definitely a food wine, rather than an easy-going sipper. It would go well with everything from a chunk of *pecorino romano* cheese and olives, to roast venison, to a wintry lentil stew.

LIST PRICE 40



## 2019 TANNAT | CLARKSBURG

194 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2032

This somewhat obscure grape originates in southwest France, and has a reputation for producing big-structured, tannic wines. But when handled a deft touch (see Petite Sirah!) its more intriguing aspects (or as Rick refers to it: ‘my honey-suckle-raspberry baby’) take center stage. Our 2019 evokes dark fruit, with just a suggestion of a musky floral note. The barrel toast contributes a touch of baking spice, and the result is a fairly big wine with an easygoing attitude. This wine could handle rich fare, perhaps tea-smoked duck or beef wellington.

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## 2019 SYRAH | SONOMA COUNTY

174 CASES PRODUCED | ENJOY NOW THROUGH 2033

Our 2019 Syrah is lush and velvety, with sweet and creamy aromatics, blackberry and rhubarb fruit, and a touch of Rhône varietal meatiness. Don't rush this one. Enjoy it through a relaxed evening, and experience it unfolding. This wine definitely has the heft and depth to age beautifully for years. For more immediate enjoyment, decant or aerate a bottle, and have it with smoked sausages, Duck *Confit*, *Cassoulet*, or braised shortribs.

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### ***Petite Sirah*: it's NOT Syrah, and not particularly petite!**

You might think that it has small berries-NOT particularly. You'd think it was Syrah-NOPE! Here's the timeline of perhaps the most confusing grape name in California winemaking:

**1880:** Dr. Durif, a nurseryman in the south of France, releases a new variety that he bred. Oddly enough, it is called "Durif".

**1884:** The Durif grape is introduced into California, and some winegrowers call it "Petite Sirah", a name commonly used for Durif in some regions of France.

**1885-1930's:** Petite Sirah grows in popularity in California, and arrives in Dry Creek Valley. Local vintners find it to be a natural field-blend partner for Zinfandel. During Prohibition, it is shipped east by the boxcar-load to home winemakers to make their "medicine".

**1940s:** The first varietal bottlings in California of "Durif" and "Petite Sirah".

**1976:** Petite Sirah acreage in California peaks at 14,000, and it is one of the predominant grapes in Napa Valley.

**1995:** Petite Sirah plantings fall to a record low of 1,400 acres.

**1997:** Rick Hutchinson is inspired by the intense character of Dry Creek Valley Petite Sirah fruit, and launches Amphora Winery. In a world then dominated by crudely over-extracted and tannic Petites (see 1995), his wine shines as an example of balance and elegance.

**1998:** At UC Davis, Dr. Carole Meredith uses DNA fingerprinting to determine the parentage of Petite Sirah/Durif. It turns out to be the love-child of Syrah (!) and Peloursin.

**2018:** Petite Sirah is back: about 12,000 acres thrive in California, with more than 300 producers worldwide. That means it is still a relative rarity, alongside about 90,000 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon...

# AUTUMN 2024 CLUB WINES

	Retail	Concierge	Platinum	Gold
2019 GSM	44	33	35.20	37.40
2018 Petite Sirah	46	34.50	36.80	39.10
2017 Barbera	36	27.00	28.80	30.60
2018 Aglianico	40	30.00	32.00	34.00
2017 Mourvèdre	35	26.25	28.00	29.75
2019 Cabernet Franc	58	43.50	46.40	49.30
2019 Sagrantino	58	43.50	46.40	49.30
2019 Tannat	42	31.50	33.60	35.70
2017 Aglianico	40	30.00	32.00	34.00
2018 Barbera	36	27.00	28.80	30.60
2019 Syrah	45	33.75	36.00	38.25



To re-order, please call us at 707.431.7767 or email us at [jim@amphorawines.com](mailto:jim@amphorawines.com), as many of these wines are exclusive to our club members and do not appear on our website. Remember, Concierge and Platinum members receive shipping discounts of 50% and 25% respectively.