



fall '20 issue



Dear and Highly Esteemed Elliptical Society Members,

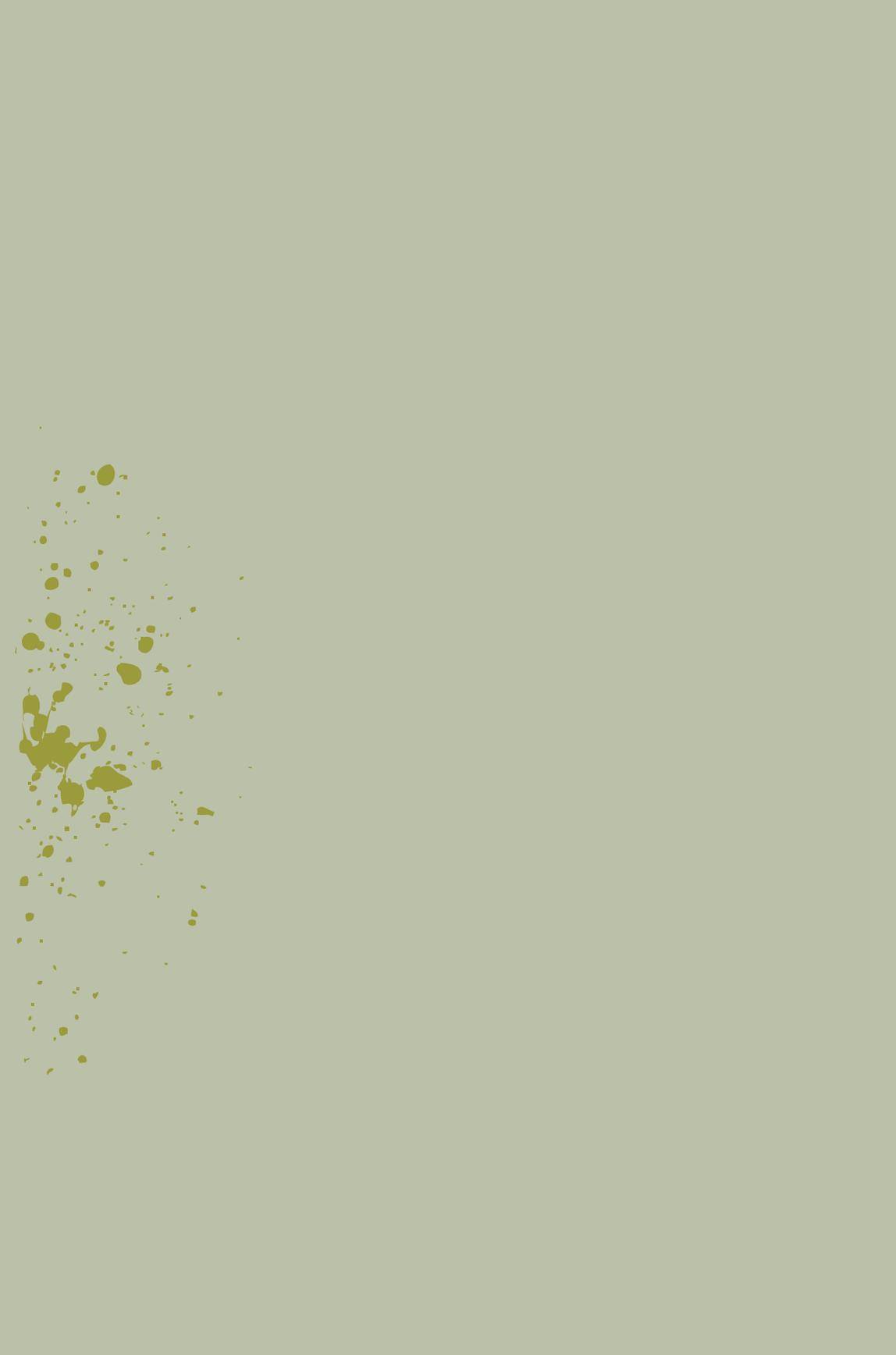
The next time you visit Le Cuvier, you might well find yourself seated on a sunny day at an al fresco table with wine and friends on our patio. With a light breeze shimmering the verdant leaves on the oak branches above, you will be served a tasting array of our current release wines, each paired with individually chef crafted hors d'oeuvres. This kind of sit-down tasting experience is something that we have been aiming to offer you for several years, though we had not been able to figure out how to make the transition, mainly due to the relatively small size of our tasting room. Even with the old belly-up-to-the-bar format, we could not fully provide you with our goal of the highest level of service and ambience once the number of people in the tasting room exceeded 30 guests.

Then COVID-19 hit, and willy-nilly our goal of converting our stand-up tasting to a sit-down experience was realized. There's nothing like a good old plague to force a change in behavior! Ironically, the pandemic has forced the change we wanted, so you will now be able to enjoy a significantly more rewarding and intimate sit-down experience in the company of your guests when you visit. We hope to continue offering these additional plaitings as we further expand our portfolio of perfectly paired culinary creations.

We anticipate that there will be ongoing changes and adjustments in terms of state and county tasting room requirements as the pandemic spins itself out over time. Regardless, we do not plan on a return to the old stand-up tasting format, especially now that we have received so many enthusiastic comments in response to the new sit-down experience. As of this writing, reservations are required for your party, of no more than 6 people, by the County Health Department to help ensure your safety and good health. Going forward, we plan to retain the reservation requirement since it ensures you will receive first priority for our limited availability seatings. As for the unwashed masses, well, they will be green with envy and will of needs stand about with heads mournfully bowed.

Lastly, we are going above and beyond in our efforts to ensure the safety and comfort of all our staff and guests. We kindly ask for your patience and your conscientious care for the health and safety of your fellow Elliptical Society members. We hope you will venture out, when you are comfortable to travel, and take in the bespoke new experience we have crafted expressly for your pleasure.

*John Munch*  
wineherd & plenipotentiary





## 2016 CHRYSOS

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At first, you are drawn to her citrine color, a hue reminiscent of the eyes of the lion-headed goddess depicted on a wall in the Valley of the Kings. As you continue admiring her color, you begin to discover her scent: fruity, rich, and spicy, very cat like of her. But then there is that mouth-watering smell of baked pear in brown butter, glazed with a mixture of kumquat & pineapple juice. The spice is harder to pin down, but you think Green Cardamom perhaps, & even a whiff of earthy, seductive Musk...oh my. After several more swirls of the glass you proceed to taste. At the front of your tongue, the citrus notes, Blood Orange, Meyer Lemon & honey laced with Egyptian vanilla powder demand your attention. Then, spreading across your palate, pineapple, baked atop bread pudding. But wait! Now the finish comes at you in a rush, and it's clearly pineapple upside down cake, sans the cherries, but with toasted walnuts and a light dusting of finely ground guajillo chile sprinkled atop the cake. The chili is just enough & it lingers, & lingers.....Oh, but now you're done for, she has you, & in a cat's eye, the seduction is complete. As you continue to sip, you find yourself humming & then singing to yourself, "*She is stardust, she is golden and we've got to get ourselves back to the Goddess*"

*notes by mary fox, proprietor*

BLEND | 67% Viognier from Alta Colina Vineyard

+ 33% Roussanne from Kirk-Landry Vineyard

## 2017 GRENACHE

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Bright, semi-translucent brush strokes of cerise encircling a reverently aged ceremonial bowl filled with dry rose petals & draped with the appealing scent of well-oiled leather jingling in a noon-day horse paddock that's been scattered about with fresh straw bedding & sprinkled here & there with cracked white pepper, sweet anise & citrus zest; & there you are, holding the warmth of crushed wild rosemary sprigs in your hand. Now go down, down into the bowl, deep down, into the swirling pool where you will revel within spicy layers of cinnamon & mulled ripe raspberry with chunks of fresh strawberry & ruby-red Tartarian cherry, & surely you will soon find yourself bouncing along in a horse-drawn caravan during the annual Romani pilgrimage to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. After all, Gypsies, Grenache & the French Camargue have been perfectly suited to each other ever since the Archbishop of Arles established a monastery there in the 6th century.

*notes by clay selkirk, winemaker & all-around cowboy*

VINEYARDS | 71.43% Kirk - Landry

+ 28.57% St. Peter of Alcantara

# GENESIS OF THE “XLB” LABEL

This all starts when I was forced to flee from San Francisco to Europe in the mid-1960’s for reasons that . . . oh, never mind. The statute of limitations might still be in effect, so I won’t go there. Anyway, during the years I lived in Europe my sister, who still resides there, bought a purple Jaguar XK-E. The “E-Type” Jag with its combination of exotic beauty, elegance and sublime supercar performance provided a thrilling ride for both body and eye, and it quickly became an icon around the world. Indeed, Enzo Anselmo Giuseppe Maria Ferrari, founder of Ferrari’s Grand Prix racing team, declared that the XK-E was “the most beautiful car ever made.” Surely, this sleek beast arrived from the factory in a rich pouch of purple velvet, just like those well-favored bottles of Crown Royal XR, you know, the Blue Label stuff with the high price. Anyway, my sister occasionally let me take the Jag out for a spin, and I would inevitably end up verifying that it could indeed make 150 MPH as advertised.

Back in the U.S. of A., and many years later, I was getting ready to bottle an extraordinary wine and I was searching for a way to somehow stamp the bottle in a manner that clearly designated the content as exotic, elegant and sublime, but with the added appellation that indicated a wine aged in barrel for an extraordinary length of time. In this case, I was preparing to bottle a “reserve” version of our 2001 Sangiovese, a wine that had been sleeping in barrel for somewhat over 60 months. Now, I had previously bottled a portion of this same wine after it had aged in barrel for 33 months, and still another portion of the 2001 Sangiovese had been bottled after 48 months in barrel. It is worth noting that in the case of these three versions of the same Sangiovese, the XLB bottling always, always stood way out in front in comparative tastings of the three wines and is thus an incorruptible argument in favor of “Extra-Long-Barrel” aging versus extended bottle aging.





Anyway, here I had in hand the last of the barrels containing a perfectly unique wine, a wine that clearly called for the bottles to be clad in purple velvet pouches with golden drawstrings. My partner Mary, who has learned how to throw cold water on my fits of enthusiasm, told me that she was fully in favor of the velvet pouches so long as I was willing to hand-sew the thousands of pouches myself . . . something about overrunning the budget, I think. With my enthusiasm temporarily curbed, I sought some other modality that would prove less time consuming and costly, and it was then that the rare, sublime richness of my sister's purple Jaguar rose up through the subliminal fogs of my mind, and in a flash of inspiration "XK-E" morphed into the homophone "XLB" which, of course, is an acronym for "Extra-Long-Barrel" aging. Perhaps a bit convoluted, but nonetheless that is the genesis of "XLB", a designation we reserved for the rarest of rare, the singular wines.

*John Munch*

*wineherd & plenipotentiary*

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FALL RELEASE / *what's in your club pack*

MIXED PACK

2016 CHRYSOS | \$54  
2017 GRENACHE | \$54  
NV PENTIMENTO '20 | \$54 X2  
2017 PETITE SIRAH | \$54  
2017 ZINFANDEL | \$54

REDS ONLY PACK

2017 GRENACHE | \$54  
2017 LITTORAL | \$54  
NV PENTIMENTO '20 | \$54 X2  
2017 PETITE SIRAH | \$54  
2017 ZINFANDEL | \$54

## 2017 LITTORAL

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As proud & regal as the king on his way to the chopping block, this wine is profoundly deep, & as pensive & opaque as smoldering black velvet. Here you have ripe cassis & tobacco, a touch of green olive with a few lovely twigs from the tree thrown in, a sprinkle of maroon-hued rose petals comingled with the juice of tart black cherries & red Hinnomaki gooseberry. The mouth fully compliments the nose in every way, save for the addition of freshly shelled walnut, dusty strawberry & cedar. And, oh yes, there's that bit of dark chocolate sprinkled with a pinch of cayenne on the tongue! Though the name "Littoral" literally pokes fun at Bordeaux, this bottle is a fine exemplar of "type" & is reminiscent of a classic red from that famous wine region of France whose blends serve as our humble Littoral inspiration.

*notes by john munch, wineherd & plenipotentiary*

BLEND | 53% Malbec + 41% Cabernet Sauvignon  
+ 6% Cabernet Franc

### NV PENTIMENTO '20 BOTTLING

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Oh, those poor starving artists! New canvas is so expensive, & of consequence it has often been the case that a painter will simply overlay an old painting with a fresh image, especially when the purse strings are being stingy. Sometimes the ghost of the original painting bleeds through the layers of the new image, & when that happens the effect is called "pentimento." Though the term ironically shares an etymological root with "penitentiary," we view Pentimento as a vinous canvas where younger wines overlay elements from each & every Pentimento we have ever bottled. Thus, each year's blend begins with a portion of the previous year's Pentimento which has been reserved in barrel. To this we overlay varying amounts of wines that we have also reserved in barrel from previous years, the youngest of which is generally approaching 4 years in barrel. In this manner, every Pentimento includes wine going all the way back to the 1998 vintage, which was the very first vintage used in our very first Pentimento bottling.

Now that you understand the Darwinian evolution of this Pentimento, perhaps a few descriptive words are in order: the hue is carmine tinted with crushed scarlet cranberry, while the nose is patrician, as elegant & regal as the snout of a very rich dowager, & withal there is a unifying scent that clearly bespeaks experience & reputable old money. The mouth is perfectly filled with luscious sun wrinkled cassis clotting at the core, & there are lashings of thick, voluptuous blackberry, smoke-roasted coffee bean & a fine whiff of forest humous from which a treasure of autumn's black truffles have just been harvested. Waggle your tongue around the dainty chew of licorice & mint, & you will find all elements reposing quaintly within an exquisitely dovetailed box of cedar & sweet yew. The total experience!

*notes by john munch, wineherd & plenipotentiary*

BLEND | a multi-vintage, solera style Bordeaux blend



## 2017 PETITE SIRAH

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With the grapes harvested in seven distinct picks over the span of a full month, the resultant wine is a luscious intertwining of all facets of the variety: a wine that conveys everything that Petite has to offer. Inky & totally opaque, with its body dressed in a racy cardinal's dark purple skirt & layered with maroon velvet sleeves, but dark as it is there are brilliant shafts of sunlight bursting through to dapple your glass, a glass filled with bitter-sweet chocolate & smoked chipotle chili peppers gently ground to fine smoothness in a basalt mortar, a silky jaguar glimmering in the jungle at evenfall; & black gunpowder tea, green tea too, & berries, berries, everywhere enthusiastic berries to pop into your mouth, blueberries, ripe berries to burst between your molars, oozing the pure essence of fancy opal plums to which several lovely twists of black pepper have been added . . . a demented wine that grips your tongue with wonderfully funky notes of licorice. No subtlety here whatsoever.

*notes by john munch, wineherd & plenipotentiary*

VINEYARDS | 41.67% Kirk - Landry + 33.33% Osgood Farms  
+ 25% St Peter of Alcantara

## 2017 ZINFANDEL

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bristling with the wicked red tint of a wild boar's eye intent upon the plump haunch of a fine-looking sow in a berry patch, this Zin distinctly catches the nose with a snap of leather strop slathered with raspberry coulis, zesty cardamom, the bite of woody terpene & pungent hay squirming with black pepper corn, juniper berry, & the smoke from an aged Cohiba, all wrapped up in corn husks atop a bed of lust . . . in other words, this is a wine that's altogether briery to the core. But then the earthy nose explodes into the mouth with lush candied fruit, blueberry jam, sun-shriveled Jubilee plum, black licorice dancing with star anise, plus there's that seductive smear of cherry & raspberry treacle dotted here & there with hoisin, all of which coalesce into a memorable finish. Since we started with a wild boar, consider inviting one to dinner nicely roasted & studded with slivers of garlic & garnished with rosemary. That would indeed be a memorable combination to tickle the tonsils!

*notes by john munch, wineherd & plenipotentiary*

VINEYARDS | 72.16% Osgood Farms + 13.92% 4 Hearts  
+ 13.92 % Loma Seca



## *a quick overview of production*

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*by Le Cuvier wineherd & plenipotentiary John Munch*

All of the grapes we use come from vineyards planted to calcareous (limestone) soils in the hills west of Paso Robles.

Roughly 95% of our grapes are from dry-farmed, head-pruned vineyards located on steep slopes.

By virtue of the soils and the vineyard cultural practices, the grapes at harvest show good maturity, with the added advantage of having very low natural pH and high acid.

The above conditions and ultimate “chemistry” of the grapes makes it possible for us to ferment our wines without use of sulfite or other additives.

By extension, we do not inoculate the grape must with yeast or other microorganisms, and microorganisms that would normally be killed or stunted via sulfite addition tend to flourish. All of our fermentations can thus be described as “natural.”

We ferment our reds and our whites in low profile open top tanks that have an approximate ratio of being 2 times as wide as tall (four foot high by eight foot wide). The white grapes are fermented on their skins just like the red grapes, and the main difference between red and white wines is that the whites typically enjoy four years or longer in barrel, rather than the three years typical for red wine aging.

The low-profile tank approach, though terribly inefficient in terms of square footage of floor space required per ton of grapes processed, results in quick extraction of color, flavor & fine tannins from the skins. As a result, we typically gravity drain the fermenting juice to barrel at roughly 1/3 of the way through fermentation. Thus, all of our wines, both red and white, are essentially barrel fermented.

All wines remain in the barrel in which fermentation was completed without racking off the lees for at least two years. The very heavy lees are stirred, and the barrels are topped no more than twice a year.

A wine’s first racking will generally take place just prior to the second year following harvest, with some wines staying on the gross lees for five or more years.

The first sulfite addition is made at the time of first racking, which in most cases takes place approximately two years following harvest. The wines are then returned to barrel for at least one additional year of barrel aging before bottling.

In terms of sulfite, it has been our long-term observation that wines made without or with minimal use of sulfite have much lower potential for oxidation than is the case with wines made using sulfite. Though this is counterintuitive, we have a large wine library that supports our contention that wines made in this manner age well beyond 25 years to significant benefit. In addition, we believe that a broader array of yeast types and other microorganisms participate in the fermentation and during the long barrel aging of our wines to significant advantage, specifically resulting in a much broader spectrum of flavors and aromas by comparison with “normal” wine processing.





