

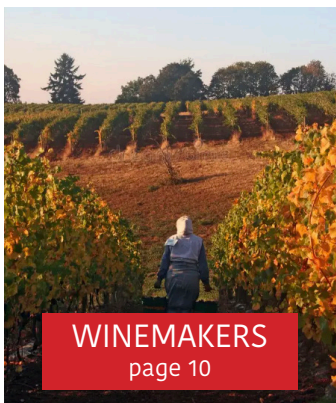
THE WINE PRESS



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photo courtesy Bushong Vintage Company

Bushong winery in Paso Robles offers two levels of membership with an optional winter addition and member-only pricing and events.

Whether it's lunch under a big oak tree or a private tasting overlooking a valley, wine club benefits can make it worth the commitment.



Join the CLUB

— BY GREG RISLING —

Chances are – at one time or another – you have joined a wine club.

The inevitable lure for us oenophiles was most certainly the wine itself. Whether it was your favorite varietal that hit your palette just right during a tasting or a varied selection of wines that intrigued you, wine clubs also tend to have a host of benefits that aim at retaining newly minted members.

But what about the clubs that have a special touch – that something extra that might get you to join?

See **CLUB BENEFITS**, page 12

**2023-2024
Board of Directors**



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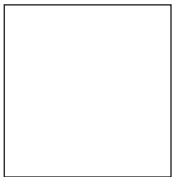



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I'm so very proud to have been your president for a third term this past year and, although I am no longer the president, I will continue to be as engaged in volunteering for the OCWS as I've ever been. My heartfelt thanks go out to all of you who had confidence and trust in me leading the organization, for all your kind words of encouragement and appreciation and the smiles and hugs that sustained me.

On Sept. 8, I had the honor to help present the state of the organization by way of our annual business meeting on Zoom. For those of you who tuned in, thank you for your interest in the workings and for wanting to know where we have been and where we have now come to over the past two years. If you were unable to join us, a recording of the meeting can be found on our website.

One of the honors the president has annually is to present the President's Award to an outstanding volunteer who has gone over and above during that year. This was, hands down, the hardest decision I had to make this year, and after much internal deliberation and debate, I just couldn't decide. Hence, at the end of my final term as president, I broke with precedence and awarded the President's Award to two people who both gave so much of themselves during the 2022-23 board year and the years leading up to this past year.

Teri Lane undertook one of the most

challenging, detailed, time-consuming and important roles in the workings of the Commercial Wine Competition, that of heading the wine cataloging. She, in addition, worked with hundreds of volunteers to assure their RBS certification and approval by the OCFEC to work at the 2023 Courtyard at the OC Fair.

Leslie Hodowanec, for the past five years, has been our scholarship chairperson, which is no small feat. Additionally, she devotes an extraordinary amount of time spearheading the set-up and tear-down of The Courtyard for the fair and, in her spare time, undertook leading the cleaning, purging and organizing of the society's two 40-foot storage containers.

It has been my pleasure to work with both Leslie and Teri and my honor to have awarded each of them the 2023 President's Award.

I am but one of many presidents who have led the OCWS over the last 48 years and will always be proud to be associated with each and every person who has lent their hands to make us what we are today—a dedicated, talented, heartwarming, caring group of individuals that, as a whole, continue to move to successes and heights never imagined.

THANK YOU all for giving me the opportunity to be among the leaders of the OCWS! I look forward to many more years of volunteering and crossing paths with all of you.

New Members CORNER

The Orange County Wine Society extends a warm welcome to its newest members! Membership for the following members was approved by the Board of Directors at the September 2023 meeting:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Kessiah & Naomi Abaniel | Elva & Mark Jiannino |
| Michelle Adams & Paul Ruiz | Joyce Jiannino |
| Jhamiela Aguado | Leisa & John Kaloper |
| Kathy Anderson | Carole & Kenneth Keane |
| Aaron Atamian & Jennifer Molina | Ken & Carin Kegel |
| Amber Baisz & Chris Colln | Douglas King |
| John Baker | Margaret Klemm |
| Edward & Jeanne Bekas | Patrick Kuehn |
| Irene Bennett | Jean Pierre Leflore & Dorothy Dawn |
| Brooke Bismack & Cheryl Gerrish | Dawn LeBrot |
| Deb & Robert Boyajian | Sara Levine & Aaron Hendel |
| Janet Canlas | Gil & Marta Mahlmeister |
| Tony & Arlene Carter | Karen Maley & Bobbie Scott |
| Sandra Casteel | Ingrid Mansir & Heidi Hrowal |
| Brandi & Gregory Celestino | Ashley & Alan Mao |
| April & Suzanne Cabrera | Diana & Mike Martin |
| Rhonda Cody & Tim Jameson | Terri & Yvette Mayville |
| Venetia & James Colwell | Kristine & Craig Mazzara |
| Cassie Comley & Brielle Cetraro | Shannon & Joe Meade |
| Jennifer & Derek Connole | Keith Morris |
| Alison Cotter & Stacy Taylor | Monica & John Stack |
| Amy Daugherty & David Paleno | Nancy & Randy Nelson |
| Laura DeSoto | Ila Patterson |
| Sarah & John Downing | David & Emily Plourde |
| Karen & Brian Drygas | Brian & Cyndi Prieto |
| Stacey Duran | Sandra Prime |
| Misti Fantozzi & Robert Ness | Phil & Bethie Rahn |
| Marcia & Dean Fisher | Christopher Rodriguez & |
| Justin & Rachel Fong | Diego Jimenez |
| Steve & Cyn Fought | Daniel & Doreen Ruiz |
| Diane Fournier | Pam Thompson |
| Roger & Lisa Frost | Rita Tupper |
| Anita Gellar | Doreen Villasenor |
| Gary & Armida Gibson | Scott Vivian & Joanne Oldfield |
| Kim Griffin & Jim Honaker | Danya Wallech & Lisa Ragsdale |
| DJ & Taylor Gunderson | Greg & Sharon Wilson |
| Cheryl & Tom Hoban | Dianne Wilson |
| Katherine Howe | Erma & Ed Worcester |
| Wendy Inskeep & Rosemary Kane | Joseph Yi & Tsebaout Yared |
| Linda Jensen | Sandra Zukowsky |

As of Sept. 1, the OCWS has 1,061 members. New Members: For new members trying to log onto our website, and who have not already created their own password, go to OCWS.org. Your default login is the primary member's email address. The default password is the primary member's zip code. Both of these may be changed under the tab "My Account" once you log on. However, there may be only one login / password per membership.

— Rochelle Randel,
Business Administrator

**The Wine Press
Staff Box**

The Wine Press is the official newsletter of the Orange County Wine Society, Inc. The newsletter is published monthly. The Wine Press welcomes input from the OCWS membership. Please forward comments, questions and suggestions to Editor@ocws.org

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2023 Wine Competition Results:
WineCompetition.com



Holiday Mini-Tasting

6-9 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023

Various Host Sites

Sign-Up Deadline:
Monday, Oct. 30

With the holiday season fast approaching, there will be ample opportunities to enjoy wines that complement holiday meals.

The November Mini-Tasting will feature a range of red wines that pair well with holiday feasts. The guests will rate the wines tasted blind in pairs and then discuss their ratings. Overall ratings from each site will be published in the wrap-up article.

Hosts: Mini-Tastings are held at various host sites around Orange County. If you would like to host this event, please e-mail George Cravens at george@ocws.org or call/text at (949) 510-5318. You may need to sign up and pay until hosts are selected. Reimbursement will be made for all host sites.

Locations: Host sites and directions will be announced to those attending approximately one week prior to the event. We try to place you at the location nearest your home or

to accommodate your specific site request; however, your assigned host site also is based on the order in which your sign-up is received in the OCWS office. The cost to attend the tasting is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests.

Mini-Tasting Etiquette: Each person attending brings a potluck dish (appetizer, entrée, side dish or dessert) ready to serve a small portion to 16 people. Please coordinate your food selection with your host site to assure

an appropriate balance of food types served during the evening. There will be a special bottle of wine that evening as a prize for Chef of the Evening. Our winning Chefs of the Evening may have their recipe published in the OCWS Wine Press.

Please plan on arriving promptly at 6 p.m. so the event can get started on time. Please bring your own wine glasses for tasting; keep in mind the wines are served in flights of two.

The cut-off date for online sign-ups is Monday, Oct. 30. After this date please contact the OCWS office to determine availability, or to be added to a waiting list. The cancellation deadline is Nov. 3 for a refund. After that date, due to the advance purchase of wines, you will not receive a refund unless there is a waiting list.

Bon Appetit!

—George Cravens,
OCWS Director

The Results ARE IN

The August Gold Medal Mini-Tasting was held at 10 sites (members' homes) across the county, with 165 people enjoying 10 wines that had each been awarded a Double Gold Medal paired with dishes prepared by the attendees. The wines were served in five blind flights of two wines each and the attendees judged each wine and voted for their favorites. Since there were eight different varietals in the lineup, the attendees also were asked to name the varietal for each wine (a brief description of the varietals was provided on the back of the scoresheet).

Since the Gold Medal Mini-Tasting always features a number of different varietals, all very highly rated, the overall scoring likely has more to do with personal taste and the food being paired than an actual comparison of the wines.

The featured wines started with two Grenache Noirs—Carol Shelton's and an unusual white wine from Dubost called "White Heart." The White Heart was 100% Grenache Noir, but had no color from the skins, making it look like a Grenache Blanc. Overall, the two Grenache wines tied for seventh place.

The overall winner also was the highest-rated wine in this year's Commercial Competition—the Runquist 2021 Charbono, which earned 98 points and Best of Class. The wine placed in the top four at eight of the 10 sites.

Second and third overall were a pair of Petite Sirahs. Second place went to the Macchia "Rebellious" and third place went to the Bushong "Unknown Pleasures." Fourth was the Reserve Old Vine Zinfandel from Hawley.

1st Place
2021 Jeff Runquist
Charbono
Sierra Foothills AVA
Amador County
\$29

The 2021 Charbono has a deep, purple-black color with youthful magenta hues. Brairy blue black fruits, boysenberry, marionberry and mulberry provide the foundation of this wine's aroma. Notes of crushed pine needles and forest floor transition to a bouquet of deeply toasted oak. Flavors of ripe blackberries and savory oak precede those of creamy mocha and dark chocolate.
Accolades: 98 Double Gold Best of Class



2nd Place
2021 Macchia
Rebellious
Petite Sirah
Lodi AVA
\$28

Petite Sirah got its name from the small size of the berries and not the wine that is produced from it. It is one of the biggest, boldest and tannic wines produced in America. These Rebellious grapes wanted to stand on their own to show the world just how good they could be. The rich ripe berry flavors are highlighted with a subtle hint of soft vanilla oak, making it a very food-worthy wine.
Accolades: 93 Double Gold



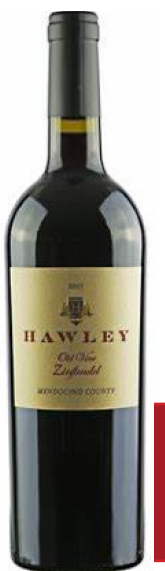
3rd Place
2020 Bushong
Unknown Pleasures
Petite Sirah
Paso Robles AVA
\$55

Enticing nose of spicy pears and white peaches, almond paste/marzipan, a touch of honeysuckle perfume. Multi-dimensional (many layers), a hard-to-describe range of aromatics, intriguing, almost mysterious. In the mouth, it is crisply dry yet creamy and round and full-bodied with nice almond paste on crisp-yet-juicy pear fruit.
Accolades: 95 Double Gold



4th Place
2021 Hawley
Reserve Old Vine
Zinfandel
Dry Creek Valley AVA
\$52

Aromas of raspberry preserves, nutmeg and rose petal. Brimming with strawberry and blue-berry fruit backed by structured tannins and bright acidity.
Accolades: 95 Double Gold



Lime Meringue Pie

Ingredients

Pie crust

5 large egg yolks (use the whites in the meringue below)
 1 1/3 cups (320ml) water
 1 cup (200g) granulated sugar
 1/3 cup (38g) cornstarch
 1/4 tsp. salt
 1/2 cup (120ml) fresh lime juice
 1 Tbsp. lime zest
 2 Tbsp. (28g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature

Meringue:

5 large egg whites
 1/2 tsp. cream of tartar
 1/2 cup (100g) granulated sugar
 1/8 tsp. salt

Directions

PREHEAT oven to 400° (204° C). Partially blind bake your pie crust.

TIP: You can get started on the lime meringue pie filling steps while your crust is blind baking. But making the filling is time sensitive because you will temper the egg yolks, so if multi-tasking isn't your thing, just wait until your crust is done blind baking before beginning the filling.

REDUCE oven temperature to 350°F (177°C).

Make the Filling:

WHISK the egg yolks together in a medium bowl or liquid measuring cup. Set aside.

WHISK the water, granulated sugar, cornstarch, salt, lime juice, and lime zest together in a medium saucepan over medium heat. The mixture will be thin and cloudy, then eventually begin thickening and bubbling after about 6 minutes. Once thickened, give it a whisk and reduce heat to low.

Chef of the EVENING

Kevin Donnelly is fond of making lime desserts, probably because he has a Bearss lime tree in his backyard! The recipe for his meringue pie, which garnered Chef of the Evening honors at the last Mini-Tasting, originally called for lemons. "But since I've done that several times, I decided to take a different route," says Kevin, an OCWS member since 2003. "In addition to my KILLER lime (and grapefruit!) wine, my Lime Meringue Pie has been a hit with my friends." With his pie and wine recipes, Kevin suggests skipping the de-acidify process and avoiding sweetening the recipe too much. "I like the tartness of the limes," he says.



Temper the egg yolks:

SLOWLY stream a few large spoonfuls of warm lime mixture into the beaten egg yolks. Then, also in a very slow stream, whisk the egg yolk mixture into the saucepan.

TURN heat back up to medium. Cook until the mixture is thick and big bubbles begin bursting at the surface.

REMOVE the pan from heat and whisk in the butter.

SPREAD filling into the warm partially baked crust.
SET ASIDE as you prepare the meringue. (Don't let the filling cool down too much as you want a warm filling when you top with the meringue. The warm filling helps seal the two layers together, preventing separation.)

Make the Meringue:

BEAT the egg whites and cream of tartar together with a handheld mixer or a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment on high speed until soft peaks form, about 5 minutes.

ADD the sugar and salt, then continue beating on high speed until glossy stiff peaks form, about 2 more minutes.

SPREAD meringue on top of filling. (I like to make decorative peaks with the back of a large spoon.) Make sure you spread the meringue all the way to the edges so that it touches the crust. This helps prevent the meringue from weeping.

BAKE for 25-30 minutes or until the meringue is browned on top. Remove from the oven, place on a wire rack, and allow to cool at room temperature for 1 hour before placing in the refrigerator to chill.

CHILL for 4 hours before slicing and serving.

COVER any leftovers and store in the refrigerator. Lime meringue pie tastes best on day 1 because it doesn't keep very well. No matter how hard you try to prevent it, the meringue will wilt and separate over time. Best to enjoy right away.

Chef of the EVENING

Shrimp, Bean & Leek Stew

Ingredients

1 tsp. fresh lemon zest and 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
 1 tsp. sweet or smoked paprika
 2 garlic cloves, grated
 Kosher salt and black pepper
 1 lb. peeled, deveined large shrimp (tails removed)
 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter (1/2 stick)
 1 large bunch of leeks, trimmed and halved lengthwise, white and green parts sliced crosswise 1/2-inch thick (or 1 large onion, minced)
 1 (15-oz.) can cannellini beans or other white beans, rinsed
 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock
 2 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh parsley (optional)

Directions

COMBINE lemon zest, paprika, garlic, 3/4 tsp. salt and 3/4 tsp. pepper in a medium bowl. Add shrimp and toss to coat.

MELT butter over medium-high heat in large pot.

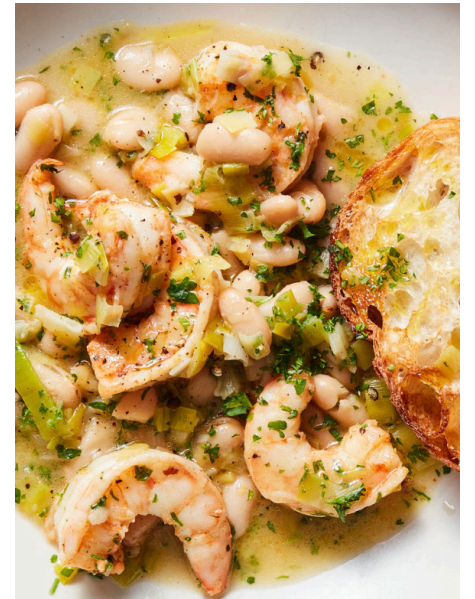
ADD shrimp and cook, stirring occasionally, until pink and starting to curl, 2-3 minutes.

TRANSFER shrimp to plate using a slotted spoon; set aside.

ADD leeks, season with salt and pepper and cook over medium heat until leeks are soft and starting to brown on the edges, 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

ADD beans and chicken broth and bring to a boil over high.

LOWER heat and simmer, 8-10



minutes.
STIR in reserved shrimp and any juices from the plate, parsley and lemon juice.

SEASON with salt and pepper.

—Recipe courtesy
 OCWS member Janet Peal

Chefs of the EVENING

Mini-Tasting attendees brought a delicious dish to share and then voted on a Chef of the Evening. The results of the Chef of the Evening at each host site are:

Hosts: Chris & Hank Bruce

Chefs: Kim & Steve Rizzuto—Blackberry Mousse Cheesecake

Hosts: Carolyn & Damian Christian

Chefs: Mary Ann & Don Meyer—Berry Pavlova with Lemon Whipped Cream

Hosts: Kim & Kristyn Grime

Chefs: Mark & Alison Godleski—Salmon

Hosts: Rochelle Randel & Leslie Hodawanec

Chef: Pam Oneida—Bacon-Wrapped Feta Figs

Hosts: Greg & Cathy Risling

Chef: Janet Peal—Shrimp, Bean & Leek Stew

Hosts: Kathy Krieger & Lynda Edwards
Chef: Linda Downey—Pork Tenderloin Crustini with Apricot Horseradish Chutney

Hosts: Rob & Germaine Romano

Chef: Kevin Donnelly—Lime Meringue Pie

Hosts: Craig & Ronna Rowe

Chefs: Debbie Renne & Ed Reyes—Nectarine Tart

Hosts: Frank & Pat Solis

Chef: Denise Scandura—Chicken Pot Pie

Hosts: Dave & Barb White

Chefs: Deb Webber—Portobello Penne
 Brenda & Robert Scott—Eggplant Parmesan

Congratulations to all the winners and a big thank you to the Mini-Tasting hosts! Look for recipes at ocws.org.

—George Cravens, OCWS Director





Holiday Dinner Dance

Friday, Dec. 1, 2023
6:30-11:30 p.m.
Avenue of the Arts Hotel
3350 Avenue of the Arts
Costa Mesa
Sign-Up Deadline:
Friday, Nov. 24, 2023



The heat of the summer has barely faded, Halloween has yet to arrive, but it is time to start planning for a longtime OCWS tradition: the OCWS Holiday Dinner Dance. Yes, it's time to think about what you are going to wear and who is going to sit at your table for an amazing evening of festivities. We are excited to announce

that the 2023 OCWS Holiday Dinner Dance will be held in December at the Avenue of the Arts Hotel near the Segerstrom Center in Costa Mesa. The evening begins with a sparkling wine reception and passed hors d'oeuvres such as bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with gorgonzola cheese and maple chipotle aioli, feta and

spinach in a puff pastry with pomegranate dipping sauce. Do we have your attention yet? The evening progresses with an amazing plated dinner in the ballroom. Seats are limited; early sign-ups are encouraged.
—Carolyn Christian
OCWS President & Event Chair

MENU

- Salad Course:**
Mixed greens, pomegranate seeds, goat cheese, toasted pumpkin seeds and raspberry vinaigrette dressing
- Your Choice of Entrée:**
- Roulade of stuffed chicken breast – dried fruit and nut stuffing, creamy herb risotto, ragout of root vegetables and roasted chicken herb gravy
 - Roasted 6 oz. top sirloin steak – herb and cheese twice-baked potato, roasted parsnips and peppercorn Cabernet jus
 - Vegetarian pumpkin ravioli – toasted almonds, crispy leeks and thyme Buerre Noisette
- Dessert:**
Chocolate ganache tart – raspberry coulise
Bread, coffee & iced tea included

WINES

A variety of wines will be provided by the OCWS, but you are welcome to bring your own bottle to share (corkage is included in the price). Other drinks are available for purchase at the hotel bar.

ACTIVITIES

After dinner, be ready to dance the night away to live music provided by our friends, Three 2 Sevens. The night will be filled with holiday cheer and your OCWS friends to bring you “Holiday Festivities!” This year’s event will feature our own photo booth area for you to take great photos of you and your OCWS friends in your holiday best!

COST

The cost of this four-course meal, wine and live music is \$100 for members and \$115 for non-member guests. The hotel also is offering an unbelievable special room rate of 15% off the lowest rate available! As always, we will be collecting unwrapped toys and gifts for children to support the Spark of Love toy drive that benefits local needy children. Please consider bringing an unwrapped gift to donate to this worthy cause. Don't miss this exciting event. As in the past, you will be able to reserve a table with your friends using the link provided on the OCWS website once you purchase your tickets. The deadline for sign-ups is Friday, Nov. 24. This event often sells out and space is limited, so sign up today!

OCWS OUTING



Treat your palette to a tasting at Bellante Winery

Did you know there are more than a dozen wineries right here in Orange County? Some have been around for more than a decade while others are new to the game. It is the goal of the Orange County Wine Society to continue to schedule events at various locations.

OCWS members are invited to a special tasting and dinner of gourmet tacos at Bellante Family Winery in Mission Viejo on Thursday, Nov. 2, from 6 to 8 p.m. Cost is \$55 per person and includes a tasting of six premier wines along with your choice of two delicious taco plates.

Guests can choose between chicken or fish and the plates will include cilantro lime or Spanish rice and black or refried pinto beans. The package includes all condiments (cilantro, onions, limes, cabbage, roasted jalapenos, guacamole, cotija and Monterey cheese), a salsa bar and corn or flour tortillas.

Attendees will be treated to 10 percent off bottles of Bellante purchases. There are only 75 slots available. The sign-up deadline is Nov 1.

Varietal HOUR

Quest for Knowledge Continues!

How many varietals are there? Did you know that some varietals have several names throughout the world? Are there any good wines for less than \$10? What are your friends at the OCWS drinking these days? The answers to these questions and more can be found at the OCWS Varietal Hours! Attendees of these fun-filled evenings will tell you that this event is a great way to share knowledge and fun stories about wine. Regardless of where you are on your wine journey, the Varietal Hours have something for everyone!

Varietal Hours are held every other Monday from 7 to 8 p.m. The themes are designed to allow attendees to pick wines already in their cellar or venture out to buy a new wine online or at a local wine store. Each participant shares what they like (or didn't like) about their wine(s) and some great stories related to the week's theme. It's a casual, fun-loving group that enjoys sharing their knowledge and learning something new. Everyone always has something to contribute to the conversation! Questions are welcome too! For

a list of Varietal Hour themes for the remainder of the year, please see the table below. Although the event is FREE to OCWS members, sign-ups are required. Please logon to the OCWS website to register for this event no later than the Sunday night before the Varietal Hour. Couples only need to sign up for one person since this event is via Zoom. A link for the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you on the day of the event. You can attend as many or as few of the Varietal Hours as you wish, but remember to sign up for each one individually. We are also looking for hosts for upcoming Varietal Hours. It's fun and easy to do. Please contact Carolyn at carolyn@ocws.org or George Cravens at george@ocws.org if you wish to host, or with any questions or suggestions. We look forward to Zooming with you soon at one of the future Varietal Hours! Cheers!

—Carolyn Christian,
OCWS President

DATE	TIME	VARIETAL	Hosts
10/9/2023	7 p.m.	Favorite White Wine	Stuart Fricke
10/23/2023	7 p.m.	Favorite Red Wine	Janet Riordan
11/6/2023	7 p.m.	Greek Wine	Bart & Shilo Bartlett
11/20/2023	7 p.m.	Favorite Inexpensive Wine (Under \$10)	Cathy & Lee Painter
12/4/2023	7 p.m.	Varietals with Multiple Names (at least 3)	CL & Adrienne Keedy
12/18/2023	7 p.m.	Holiday Wines	Your Name Here

Support Award-Winning Wineries from Competition

Help us get the word out about OCWS' prestigious wine competition and California's amazing wineries that have won medals at the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition. Next time you are at a winery that has our medals or awards posted, take a picture with the awards and post it to

social media (Facebook or Instagram). Let people know they can find all the winners at WineCompetition.com / Tag the post with @ocwinesociety and use the hashtags #ocfairwinecompetition and #ocwsloveswineries. Each month, we'll draw a winner for a bottle of wine from the previous month's posts!

New Member MIXER

Invitation-only event for new OCWS members

New members are invited to a special event dedicated just to them. At this free, invite-only OCWS event, new members can meet other new members and the Board of Directors as well as learn more about the many events the Orange County Wine Society has to offer.

TIME: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
DATE: Saturday, Nov. 18
LOCATION: Yorba Linda area (exact location will be emailed 3 to 5 days prior to event)
ATTIRE: Casual (event will be indoors)
NOW SERVING: Wine, water, and light appetizers

This event is restricted to new members who joined on or after Jan. 1, 2023, and who have not previously attended a new member mixer.

To sign-up for this event, go to www.ocws.org, logon to your OCWS account, and look for the new member mixer under “events.” You can also access the event using the link below. The deadline for reservations is Monday, Nov. 13.

If you have never logged on to your OCWS account, your username is the email of the primary member on your account and your password is your zip code. You will be prompted to change your password the first time you logon. If you have issues accessing your account, please contact the OCWS office staff at (714) 708-1636.

—Linda Flemins,
 OCWS Director and
 New Member Mixer Chair

Winemakers GROUP

Celebrating the Harvest

October means many things to many people. Most wine aficionados immediately think of the harvest parties and special events happening at winery tasting rooms.

For grape growers, it’s the end of many months of work nurturing and tending the vines.

For winemakers, it’s the beginning of a new vintage. Fresh grapes are now arriving and our work is just starting.

Precious grapes that had been in the hands of a grower are now in the hands of the winemaker. This is the winemaker’s first opportunity to control the winemaking process and it starts as soon as the grapes are harvested. There are many things to consider: How are the grapes handled after picking? What methods, if any, will be used to extract color and flavor from the grape skins? How much will acidity be adjusted? What yeast will be used to ferment? To what dryness do you ferment? How will the wine be pressed? During processing, will the winemaker use gentle methods like gravity to move the wine and preserve flavor?

These are among the many decisions made in just the first few weeks of processing a new vintage. Other decisions like clarification, using oak, blending and aging come later and at a much slower pace. Arguably, harvest is the most important time in the winery.

Whether you’re making a hundred bottles or so as a home winemaker or a hundred barrels at a commercial winery, it’s the same. The choices and actions the winemaker takes at this time have a profound impact on how a wine will turn out years into the future.

The Winemakers Group Annual Holiday Party will be 4 to 8 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 3, in Yorba Linda. Signups are also now open on the website. Cost to attend this potluck event is \$18 per person. All OCWS members are welcome. You don’t need to be a winemaker to attend.



Think about that the next time you open a bottle of your favorite wine. The reason it tastes the way it does now is because of the decisions a winemaker made, possibly many years ago, hard at work in the winery while harvest celebrations were happening in the tasting room.

The Winemakers Group will be having our post-harvest celebrations too. Save the dates and join us.

Our next quarterly meeting and potluck will be Saturday, Nov. 4, from 1 to 4 p.m. The Laguna Hills location will be announced approximately one week prior to the event. Signups are now open on the OCWS website.

Cost is \$5 per person to cover supplies. All OCWS members are welcome to attend. Winemakers, our testing team are conducting SO2 tests for your wines prior to the meeting. Attendance is limited so sign up now!

—Ed Reyes,
 Ed@ocws.org



SPECIAL EFFECTS

Paul Garfield snapped this winning photo in the Vega Winery tasting room in Buellton featuring the wine bar with the reflection of the American flag. “I liked the way that a wine glass seemed suspended and mirrored,” Paul said. “The uneven polished surface of the bar created an interesting effect.”

Calling all OCWS photographers

The OCWS sponsors a photography contest and you are invited to participate! As you might have guessed, the subject is “wine,” but this can mean many things to many people.

Do you have a great shot of the sun filtering through the vines just before picking? Or an action shot of wine being poured with some great swirls in the glass? Perhaps a romantic shot of a couple toasting each other?

These are a few ideas and I’m sure you have many more of that great

shot involving wine in some way.

Each month the photography committee will select a Photo of the Month for publication in the upcoming newsletter as well as on the OCWS website. The winner also will receive a bottle of wine from the OCWS wine cellar. The ultimate goal is to publish an OCWS calendar consisting of the 12 best photos of the year. These may or may not be the 12 monthly winners.

If you have any questions, email Photo@OCWS.org.

THE RULES

1 Entrants must be OCWS members in good standing and the submitted photo must have been photographed by the OCWS member when he/she was an active member.

2 The photo must be somehow wine oriented. It may be of a winery, vineyard, the winemaking process, the finished product or simply the consumption. But don’t limit yourself just to these ideas!

3 The photo or photos may be submitted to the OCWS photography committee anytime but will be considered only for the month it was submitted. There is a limit of five (5) submissions per month.

4 Upon submission, rights to the photo are given to the OCWS for marketing purposes, so before you submit it make sure it is your property. Please get permission from any people in the photo.

5 The photo must be submitted in one of the following formats: JPEG, RAW, TIFF or Photoshop. Any size is acceptable, but it is preferred to be at least 3000x2400 pixels, which is an 8”x10” shot at 300 dpi for printing.

6 In the event that insufficient entries are entered in a month, the committee reserves the right to move any contributed photos to the next month.

To submit a picture, attach it in an email to Photo@OCWS.org. Be sure to include your name, phone number, picture location and picture title. Photos are due by the last day of the month to be considered for that month’s winner.

CLUB BENEFITS, from page 1

At Sunce Winery in Santa Rosa, members can get a complementary sunset cruise in San Francisco Bay. Bushong Vintage Company in Paso Robles offers an annual Winter Vinyl Package where customers get three red wines and a new, collectible record picked by owner Jason Bushong himself. How about virtual tastings with comedian Martin Short and late-night TV host Jimmy Kimmel at Hall Wines in S Helena? And over at Eberle Winery, also in Paso Robles, military and law enforcement get a whopping 40 percent off purchases that also applies to the wine club.

Discounts are usually the biggest appeal people are given when they join a club. It often ranges between 10 and 30 percent, with free shipping or maybe even a local pickup where members get to taste the most recent releases.

Of course, joining a wine club usually means free tastings at the winery itself. And given that some tastings for visitors in Napa, Sonoma or elsewhere can be north of \$50 to \$100, it makes sense to join a club and get shipments two to three times a year.

OCWS members Dino and Adrienne Amico have some sage advice for fellow members when it comes to shipping.

“We have our wines shipped to a FedEx store near our home so we don’t have to be home to sign for the delivery,” Adrienne says. “FedEx keeps the box in its air conditioned space and allows us five days to pick it up before returning it to the sender.”

Joining a club also means that you are part of a new family. However, with larger corporations snatching up wineries across California, that fami-

CALIFORNIA WINERIES: BY THE NUMBERS

Oldest Winery:

D’Agostini Winery
Healdsburg, CA

Registered Wineries:

4,800

Winegrape Growers:

5,900

Ranking:

Largest wine producer in country

U.S. Wine Production:

81 percent of total

Wine Sales:

\$78.4 billion

American Viticulture Areas:

147

Registered Wine Labels:

60,000

Economic Value:

generates \$88.12 billion

No. of Jobs:

330,000



Friendly, knowledgeable staff make members feel like part of the family—which they are, really! We welcome everyone with a smile.

—Paula Baker
Fallbrook Winery



ly feel has been tougher to retain.

At Navarro Vineyards and Winery in Mendocino County, family is the name of the game. Aaron Bennett and his sister, Sarah Cahn-Bennett, run the winery founded in the early 1970s by their parents, Ted Bennett and Deborah Cahn.

The winery’s pre-release tasting program centers on a direct relationship between the winemaker and the customer and during each release, Ted and Deborah delve deeper into stories of the 20 to 25 wines they produce, giving members a behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to make each wine.

Aaron says Navarro tries to make the wines affordable while not cutting corners to ensure people get the highest quality wine.

“It was important for us that access to those wines should not be elitist,” he says. “Additionally, I believe our members generally have an appreciation for multiple varietals and an eagerness to learn and try different wine and different styles. We’re constantly keeping our ears to the ground and experimenting with different approaches.”

The answer is simple for Mike Owen, president and CEO of Crystal Basin Cellars in El Dorado County, when asked to describe the typical club member for his winery.

“Over 21 with lips,” cracks Mike. “Some people are very curious in a wine-centric way and others like the social aspect and our ‘Cheers’-like approach to hospitality.”

Mike added that Crystal Basin allows customers to swap out wines in the same categories to fit their particular favorites; members can skip up to a year of shipments so they

See WINERIES, page 13



At Navarro Vineyards and Winery, owners Aaron Bennett and his sister Sarah Cahn-Bennett enjoy giving members a sneak peak into what goes into making their wines.

WINERIES, from page 12

can retain club benefits; and there are two programs that reward members referring friends, including a \$100 discount on a case of wine.

OCWS members Cathy and Lee Painter belong to several wine clubs. While they have leaned toward smaller, family-owned wineries, they have enjoyed Onx Wines, located in the Tin City area of Paso Robles. Before getting your shipment, Onx lets you order 2-ounce sample bottles and also hosts a Zoom tasting with the winemakers and cooking classes.

“They provide a bottle of white or rose to drink while cooking and a bottle of red to have with dinner, plus a pack of all the ingredients for the meal,” Lee says. “We’ve done four of these, making seared duck breast, homemade pasta, paella and Christmas cookies.”

Paula Baker, office manager at Fallbrook Winery in San Diego

County, says the winery strives to keep its “small town, friendly vibe” – right down to guests getting greeted by Cooper, the winery’s beloved dog that likes to herd folks into the tasting room.

Members at Fallbrook can swap out different varietals for their quarterly shipment that best suits them. They also can get intimate seating in the cave, invites to club parties and small group tastings with winemaker Euan Parker or another member of the production team.

“Friendly, knowledgeable staff make members feel like part of a close-knit family – which they are, really!” says Paula. “We welcome everyone with a smile.”

The good news for those wanting to join a wine club is that there is no shortage of choices and with a little research and ample time to taste, a suitable match is only a click away.



Joining a Wine Club: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

With thousands of wineries throughout the state of California, choosing the wine club that’s right for you can be daunting. Before you commit, consider the following:

Shipping can really add up. Be sure yours is included.

...

A club that offers quarterly shipments will typically cost twice as much as biannual shipments simply because you’re getting more bottles. Know how much you’re willing to spend.

...

Do you prefer whites over reds and avoid rose varietals? Customized allocations may be just your thing.

...

Look into discounts on future orders, incentives for referring a friend and even free bottles.

...

Private tours, invite-only parties and lunch in the vineyard are great reasons to join.

...

Consider the cancellation and return policies before you decide whether the membership works for you.

2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

2023-2024

OCWS Board of Directors

SEPTEMBER 30

FALL MEMBERSHIP SOCIAL
THE COURTYARD / OC FAIRGROUNDS / COSTA MESA

OCTOBER 9

VARIETAL HOUR / FAVORITE WHITE WINE
VIA ZOOM

OCTOBER 23

VARIETAL HOUR / FAVORITE RED WINE
VIA ZOOM

NOVEMBER 2

ORANGE COUNTY WINE SOCIETY OUTING
BELLANTE FAMILY WINERY / MISSION VIEJO

NOVEMBER 4

**WINEMAKERS GROUP QUARTERLY MEETING
& POTLUCK / LAGUNA HILLS**

NOVEMBER 6

VARIETAL HOUR / GREEK WINE
VIA ZOOM

NOVEMBER 11

HOLIDAY MINI-TASTING
VARIOUS LOCATIONS

NOVEMBER 18

NEW MEMBER MIXER
YORBA LINDA

NOVEMBER 20

**VARIETAL HOUR / FAVORITE INEXPENSIVE
WINE / VIA ZOOM**

DECEMBER 1

OCWS HOLIDAY DINNER DANCE
AVENUE OF THE ARTS HOTEL / COSTA MESA

DECEMBER 3

**WINEMAKERS GROUP HOLIDAY PARTY
& POTLUCK / YORBA LINDA**

DECEMBER 4

**VARIETAL HOUR / VARIETALS WITH MULTIPLE
NAMES / VIA ZOOM**

Officers

President - Carolyn Christian

Vice President - Fran Gitsham

Treasurer - Mel Jay

Secretary - Rich Skoczylas

Board Members

George Cravens

Linda Flemins

Fred Heinecke

John Lane

Congratulations to the 2023-2024 Board of Directors!

Are you interested in serving on the OCWS Board for one year?

During our recent elections, we did not receive a third candidate to fill our vacant position. Per our by-laws, the current Board may appoint someone to serve on the Board if the election does not produce enough candidates to fill the nine-member Board. Because of this, we are looking for one Board member to serve a one-year term until our next election. Interested candidates may submit their application to the OCWS Board of Directors no later than Monday, Oct. 8, for consideration. The link below will take you directly to the application form.

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Flemins - lindaf@ocws.org

www.bit.ly/3LwXyi2