

Happy New Year – 2022!

Thank you kindly for a stellar first year in our Wine Fam! We had such a great time choosing and tasting A TON of fun and interesting wines for you. And we hope you had just as much enjoyment drinking, and learning more about them.

Get to know one another!

We just started a private Facebook group: BSS Wine Fam. Please request to join! It's completely members-only, so no worries about lurkers. Ask questions, share your tasting notes. Your input is important. We'll be looking forward to viewing your pics and comments. We'll also publish Wine Fam events, (wine dinners, special offers, etc.), and we wouldn't want you to miss out.

Grape vs. Grape: France & California

For the first 2022 wine offering, all four wines chosen were from France or California (2 from each location). We wanted the wines to be red, robust, and comforting. We wanted to contrast region against region. Grape against grape.

First up, is Merlot, Bordeaux vs. Napa. Both are lush and rich, but the Bordeaux has more earthy flavors, while the Napa is juicier and fruitier.

The second wines are red blends, predominantly Grenache and Syrah grapes, with slight additions of their own blending grape to give it their special signature flavor. You'll learn about the region of Lirac (Southern Rhone valley), and a newer wine region in Santa Barbara County, California; Ballard Canyon. These wines will taste drastically different, so enjoy their nuances, and bask in the experience. These four wines are ready to drink now.

Wine Fam Referral Program

2021 was a first for us with the Wine Fam. We feel we have worked out most of the kinks and we'd like to see our community grow this year. So, please refer us new fam members. For each successful referral you make to the BSS Wine Fam, we will issue a \$75 gift certificate for you to use in the restaurant.

Thank you again for being a vital part of our wine community. And if you know someone who'd be interested in maybe joining, have them please email us at info@bss517.com.

Take care and we're looking forward to sharing wine and smiles with you soon!

Chateau Saintayme St. Emilion Grand Cru 2018

Here we have it. A beautiful Bordeaux from the right bank. Yes, this gorgeous wine comes from the world-renowned Bordeaux region of France, specifically the right bank. The combination of limestone, clay, and gravel soil provide the optimal environment (terroir) to grow sensational merlot grapes. The vines from this specific vineyard are 35 years old. You'll probably hear us talk more about 'left bank and 'right bank' when it pertains to the wines of Bordeaux. Basically, the left bank (located on the west side of the Garonne River) has more gravel in the soil, making it better suited for Cabernet Sauvignon grapes to thrive. And the right bank (located on the north/east side of the Dordogne River) has more clay in the soil, which means slower water drainage, making it ideal for the merlot grape to grow and flourish. Left bank: Cab. Right bank: Merlot. See, you didn't need to go through sommelier training to learn that!

The color of this spectacular offering is deep purple with slight garnet edges. Get out a piece of paper towel, and lay your glass almost sideways on top of it, (be careful not to spill!) and survey these wonderful, rich colors. When you smell it, you probably experience ripe plum preserves, crushed blackberries, and chocolate-covered cherries. After you've basked in these wonderful scents, take in a healthy sip. Let it roll inside your mouth. Maybe take-in a little air while doing this and swish it around. Just for the first couple drinks, as we want you to enjoy the wine, not completely study it. You should taste some earthy notes of fresh tobacco, lavender, a touch of cedar, and tilled soil, along with a good array of the fruit scents we just mentioned. You won't get all of this at once, but you should get most through the course of the glass. We recommend decanting this wine for an hour to round-out the woody notes, allowing for a lush/rich drinking experience. Take your time, and pour another glass.

Rutherford Ranch Merlot, Napa 2018

Napa merlot is probably best enjoyed in cooler weather. It's such a big, rich and warming wine, it might prove too encompassing and brooding in the summer months. So, now's your chance to get the best of this California delight. According to this producer, these merlot grapes experienced an exceptional growing season. A dry winter and rainy spring, followed by a sunny summer provided the ideal climate to grow this prized fruit!

If you're not careful, merlot can come-off very heavy and boozy. Rutherford Ranch blended a small amount of Petite Syrah and Malbec to their Merlot, to attain firm structure, a bit of earthiness, keeping it balanced, rich, and vibrant.

Eyeing this wine in a glass, it's as deep purple as they come. The nose will evoke ripe blueberry, cherry preserves, vanilla bean, and a hint of sage. The flavors will be big and comforting. As this velvety dream glides across your palate, you should taste, (and we mean this in the best way possible) freshly baked blueberry pie with a lightly toasted buttery crust. This merlot delivers all the richness of these flavors without being saggy and clumsy. Still, it's a big merlot, weighing in at 14.5% abv, (which easily means north of 15% alcohol). It's full-bodied and voluptuous. So, take your time and lose yourself in this warm embrace of a wine.

Domaine Maby “La Fermade” 2019 (Lirac)

The wine region of Lirac is located next to one of our most favorite and famous French wine regions, Châteauneuf du Pape, in the southern Rhone Valley. These regions make dynamic red blends that are very comparable in style mainly because they share almost identical climate and soil, which is characterized by galets, or large smooth stones that completely surround the base of the vines and retain the heat of the sun to ripen the grapes. Lirac is just west of Châteauneuf du Pape (CDP) and is less than half the size of CDP. Another cool thing about wines from Lirac, (just like wines from CDP) is they have their own regional crest embossed on the bottle, giving it a special look/vibe.

This tasty gem is comprised mainly of grenache grapes, with equal parts mourvedre and syrah blended-in. The stone-surrounded vines are about 40 years old, which have been part of the privately owned Maby family for over seventy years. Domaine Maby is proud of its entirely manual vineyard management and care, believing the human touch brings out the very best of its esteemed soil and climate (terroir).

La Fermade is 100% stainless steel fermented and aged, allowing this full-bodied masterpiece to be enjoyed today. It will hold in the cellar for 3-4 more years. On the nose, you'll get black cherry, cassis, violets, red raspberry, and black pepper. Raise the glass to your mouth and enjoy the exact same flavors you just smelled. You might even be greeted with clove/allspice before you take your next sip.

Le P'tit Paysan Le P'tit Pap 2018

Winemaker Ian Brand moved to California to pursue a life of surfing, but quickly got bitten by the wine bug. He must be doing something right, as he was named winemaker of the year 2018 by the San Francisco Chronicle. He is a bit of a rebel, and the purpose of his P'tit Paysan project is to present simple, unpretentious "country" wines. In reality these simple wines come from some unique vineyard sites that Ian has scouted in the backcountry of Monterey and the surrounding area. Most of these vineyards exhibit very poor soils, in harsh conditions just on the edge of feasible farming. The struggle these vines must face makes for some intense fruit. Aged in neutral French oak barrels for 11 months.

The blend of this wine is 52% Grenache, 36% Syrah, and 12% Mourvèdre, otherwise known as a 'GSM' (Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre). This is a typical Rhone valley blend, but with a much different flavor profile. You should smell bright red fruits, cherry, cranberry, pomegranate, under-ripe strawberries, followed by smoky meat characteristics with black pepper. Flavors are carried atop a bright, acidic, medium body that include candied red raspberries, white pepper, dried herbs, bay leaf, and thyme. The finish is savory, (you might even taste the smokiness you detected in the aroma) but still bright and lively. The firm tannins (thanks to the Mourvèdre grapes) will soften with an entire 30-60 minute decanting, or just let your glass sit for 15 min.

We're very happy with this California rendition of a Rhone GSM. If you have the time to try a small (or big) glass side-by-side with the Domaine Maby "La Fermade", it will prove to be an enjoyable and enlightening tasting.