

# Bridge Street Social

Sept '25 WINE FAM

Greetings awesome fam!

How was your summer? Hurry and soak-in every last drop, wherever you are! And drink all the wine your heart desires!

We are back with our third annual installment of wines from Stolpman Vineyards in Ballard County, California. We have had a long relationship with Pete Stolpman and his crew and absolutely love their wines. So, every September we bring you four wines from them that have not been made available in Michigan. Mostly these are wines that you would only have access to at the winery!

Stolpman is located in Ballard Canyon (northwest of Santa Barbara) and is considered part of the greater Santa Ynez Valley AVA. Ballard Canyon experiences cold nights and short periods of day-time heat. The diurnal swing approaches 40 degrees and it is typical to have daytime highs over 90 degrees Fahrenheit and lows around 50 during the growing season. The climate and soils in the region lend themselves well to growing Rhone Valley varietals, which Stolpman spends much time on.

Stolpman Vineyards was founded by Tom Stolpman in the mid-90's, mainly as a growing operation and quickly developed a reputation as growing amazing grapes for wine. Some of the early clients of Stolpman were Sine Qua Non and Daou. His son, Pete, took over in the late 2000's and shifted the focus to wine making. From there the wines produced by Stolpman have achieved amazing acclaim.

See you soon on our FB page, and at the restaurant. In the meantime, let's all hold on to summer as long as we can!

Cheers!

Mike Luther

owner/executive chef

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Stolpman Vineyards – Ballard Canyon, Santa Barabara, CA  
'Vin Gris' (2024) (1,000 cases produced in total)

You'll get used to 'Ballard Canyon', as Stolpman is 100% responsible for making Ballard Canyon an officially recognized wine growing region. The term for official winegrowing regions in the United States are, 'AVA' (American Viticultural Area). Ballard Canyon is essentially a replica of the Rhone Valley, although it runs west to east where the Rhone runs north to south. Much of the climate and ocean effect is the same and therefore Rhone varietals (Syrah, Grenach, Mourvedre, Roussane, Viognier) perform at a high level in this AVA.

Unbridled with concern over categorizing this wine as a Red or a Rose, Pete and crew have pursued the heights of pure deliciousness in their Vin Gris since 2017. Uncrushed, left whole cluster for two weeks. The untouched grapes sit exposed to air, not carbonic, to allow for supple roundness and secondary flavor and texture to naturally evolve. For the second vintage in a row, they settled on the blend of 70% Gamay and 30% Trousseau, but this shows more ripeness and depth due to the vintages low yield than previous vintages.

High-toned fruit punch perfection over firmer cranberry and boysenberry crunchiness. With a quenching zip of acid and tannin, the wine blazes a streak straight through the mouth to a lightweight carbon fiber framework finish. Warming up with air, more piercing, deeper red fruits emerge and the wine becomes weightier: a heavy ground fog wrapping around the hills beneath an ultra-bright sunrise overhead. The perfect hybrid between rosé and red.

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Stolpman Vineyards – Ballard Canyon, Santa Barbara, CA  
'Trousseau' (2024) (400 cases)

Trousseau's typical large, thin-skinned grapes deliver one of the lightest, most delicate red wines from the entire Stolpman Estate. First produced in 2014 under their experimental "Combe" line of wines (and my first exposure to both Stolpman and Trousseau), the Trousseau vines have slowly adapted to life in our arid limestone, producing slightly denser, riper wines now that they are mature.

A lavender haze hangs below billowy clouds of tropical and red fruit essence. One of the lightest, easiest, most effortless wines produced out of any varietal grown on Stolpman Vineyards. The barrels selected for the 2024 Trousseau show a refined smoothness, no arms or legs, no perceptible tannin – just the magic touch! So light and airy it rises above typical fruit and juice descriptions, as the sensations remain so delicately aromatic through the mouth. While such a light profile could be fleeting, a captivating tang and energy beckons one back. A dangerous parallel to draw, the 2024 trousseau contains the delicate prettiness many chase in Premier Cru burgundy from cool vintages.

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Stolpman Vineyards – Ballard Canyon, Santa Barbara, CA  
'Hilltops Syrah' (2021) (620 cases)

Stolpmna first vineyard designated this cuvee from their modern-day Hilltops block in 2008, only 4 years after replanting the Estate's center ridge to a variety of their favorite Syrah strains and clones. Since then, they have refined the Hilltops cuvee into a tight selection of their favorite micro-blocks within the greater hilltop. Prior to 2008, the Hilltops wine came from a barrel selection of the most intense Syrah from all three ridges on the vineyard. With less clay topsoil on the ridges and further exposed to the Ballard Canyon Pacific wind, the vines on the ridges yield lower for further concentration of flavor. Those grapes are now blended into the main Estate Grown Syrah cuvee.

A deep ocean of purple brimmed with flecks of red at sunset. Lapping, coating waves of lushness float candied cherries onto shore. Hints of vanilla, caramel, and toast make the wine all the more hedonistic, and that's all on the nose let alone the palate. Ripe, rich, supple red then takes over the mouth. Fleshy and inviting upon release in late 2024, the only remnants of youth appear after the long finish. The last release of the Stolpman's 2021 vintage, Pete says it's been a joy to watch the Hilltops unfurl in barrel and bottle.

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Stolpman Vineyards – Ballard Canyon, Santa Barbara, CA  
'La Croce' (2021) (490 cases)

When consultant Alberto Antonini first came to the Stolpman vineyard in January of 2001, he was shocked to hear that year in and year out, they enjoy the coincidence of Syrah and Sangiovese ripening together. Alberto had dreamt of such a parallel his entire career in Italy. More specifically, he thought co-fermenting red-hued, high-strung Sangiovese with dark, savory Syrah would create the benchmark for all Super Tuscan blends to follow. But in Italy, Alberto found that Syrah ripened a month ahead of Sangiovese, rendering his dream impossible – until he arrived in Ballard Canyon. Stolpman prefers to co-ferment grapes rather than blending finished wine because the elements of each varietal integrate together through the process of fermentation. Primary flavor traits develop during the first portion of fermentation, and if that development happens with varietals already combined, the wine will be markedly different than trying to blend separate lots later. Of course, the reason few modern winemakers employ co-fermentation is the inherent lack of control. La Croce is truly vineyard-crafted. Alberto turned out to be right. After their first stab at co-fermenting Sangiovese and Syrah in 2001, they were hooked. In 2004 Stolpman planted three clones of high-density Sangiovese along a ridgeline surrounded on either side with Syrah. Sangiovese trails behind Syrah in ripening, so we give it all-day sunshine on the hilltop while each Syrah block only receives partial-day direct exposure on either hillside.

The 2021 La Croce (50/50 Sangiovese/Syrah) shows lavish brushes of fruit, coating reds with black inlays. Blueberry and vanilla bean grant further downright deliciousness while fruit compote resonates through the palate. A combination of toasted nut, fine tannin, and bright acidity lend a dry, serious finish behind all of that “yumminess”. The wine is already gorgeous but will further blossom with a few years of integration.