



QUALITY MATTERS.

BARREL SELECT

Palumbo Family

Sustainability and its impact on the vineyard and wine quality



Cougar

Educating the public on unfamiliar Italian varietals INSIDE

Reviews

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PROPRIETOR'S BLEND

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PHOTO BY LIFT CREATIVE STUDIO COURTESY OF PALUMBO FAMILY VINEYARDS & WINERY

“For me and the people that truly embrace and participate in programs like the California Sustainable Winegrowing Program, it becomes more than just a checklist... more a way of thinking about everything we do.”

NICK PALUMBO, WINEMAKER & OWNER

Sustainable farming utilizes techniques that are not only good for the environment and community, but also make good economic sense. It blends organic, biodynamic, thoughtful research, and conventional methods to tackle vineyard problems geared toward improving grape and wine quality. For owner, grower and winemaker Nick Palumbo a path to participating in the California Sustainable Winegrowing Program arose from a constant search for a better way to do things. “I noticed the huge amount of water being applied to wines in our region, which led to what I thought was excessive growth in the vineyards. That led to researching how to lower water amounts. Which led to better vine balance and, ultimately, better wine. We are better farmers, better stewards of the land and community. It’s improved our wine and our business.”

After nearly two decades in Temecula Valley Nick has had a lot of time to research, adapt and improve his approach to farming his family land. Winegrowing in Temecula Valley is much different now. Advanced technology improved all aspects of weather monitoring, soil analysis, pest and disease management, and how specific varietals are farmed. Even allowing Nick to make daily decisions when it’s needed. Though, he cautions “rather than knee jerk reactions to potential problems, I learned to research the possibilities and pick the best option given the current issue... using thoughtful and fact based research to make decisions.” Less is more and often, with a little patience, “problems” will take care of themselves in a well maintained, healthy and balanced vineyard. “An example is letting beneficial bugs thrive and battle the problem pests naturally. If I were to treat immediately, the beneficial bugs wouldn’t have time to do their thing.”

For Nick, the quality of his wines have dramatically improved since embracing Sustainability and settling on a style that he believes is refined, complex, approachable, varietally true and shows a sense of place (terroir). “The overall balance of the wines are much better since I started applying sustainable methodology. Specifically, cutting back on water, and controlling vine balance that way, really helped develop phenolic ripeness at lower Ph levels, maintaining acidity and allowing harvesting before the “cooked fruit” qualities develop that are common to warmer regions. Using technology like weather stations and soil moisture probes allowed me to deficit irrigate at the appropriate time in order to achieve this balance. This alone was a “win-win-win” in that it made better wine, lowered my water use and significantly reduced my water bill!”

TOP PICKS - RED

2015 Danza del Sol Petite Sirah

Typically inky dark, this bottling is just a shade transparent. An aromatic bouquet of smashed black plums and blackberries with savory undertones of graphite, bramble and bay leaf. Powerful black fruits pack a punch to the palate, yet calmly relent to tasty chocolate covered coffee beans, cedar, cardamom and peppercorn. A controlled 13.8% alcohol combined with a controlled acidity and ripe tannins keep the full bodied wine from the usual Petite Sirah trappings of high alcohol and excessive tannin present in many Temecula Valley Petite Sirahs.

EXCELLENT+

2015 Avensole Solea

Ruby red with dried cherries and herb aromatics. A balanced palate that is loaded with juicy cherry, blueberry, and plum fruit and touches of stones, anise and leather. Hints of earthiness in the nose and on the finish. 90% Tempranillo, 5% Cabernet Franc and 5% Merlot

EXCELLENT

2015 Oak Mountain Pinotage

Deep garnet, much darker than inexpensive South Africa Pinotage, with rich aromatics of cedar and black cherry, smoked sausage, and vanilla. This has a sophisticated, balanced and savory palate that is increasingly eclectic with every sip - roasted herbs, coconut, nutty, toffee, black pepper, stewed black plum, mushroom and tobacco leaf.

EXCELLENT

2016 Doffo Syrah

This is another wine that shows a fair amount of restraint. Slightly tart cherry and strawberry fruit aromas are reflected on the palate. Subtle, complex flavors of leather, smoke, vanilla, roasted nuts, and dried herbs accompany a moderate 13.4% alcohol to leave a satisfying taste in the mouth. No new oak.

EXCELLENT

Cougar Vineyards & Winery

When Rick and Jennifer Buffington moved from Washington State's Cougar Mountain to Fallbrook establishing a Temecula winery was never high on their "To Do" list. But as demand for their successful Sangiovese and Montepulciano grew, the Buffingtons needed new equipment and more space to adequately expand the business. Instead of purchasing equipment in Temecula, Jennifer realized a move to Temecula might work. "Next thing you know... we found the winery property on a nice straight stretch of De Portola with barren, unplanted and ungraded land."

Once established in Temecula, Italian varietal vineyard consultant Pete Anderson recommended that they continue to plant Italian varietals ideally suited for Temecula's climate and soil. The combination of well draining, decomposed granite soil and large diurnal shift - from hot days to cool nights - are ideal for Italian varietals. However, as harvest approaches, the vines can shut down due to daytime summer temperatures exceeding 100°F. To combat this, Cougar prunes the poorer ripening grapes to assist the vines in fully ripening the remaining grapes, thus producing higher quality fruit. Over the years, they've planted Sangiovese, Aglianico, Montepulciano, Vermentino, Arneis, Coda di Volpe and a neighboring property, owned by Jennifer's brother Bob, planted Primitivo, Pinot Grigio, Negroamaro, Malvasia Bianca, Sagrantino, Lambrusca di Alessandria and Piediroso. But not all varietals have done well. Coda di Volpe was removed and Vermentino was grafted over with a native Campanian grape, Falanghina. The original Fallbrook vineyard has now been grafted over with Brachetto.

Cougar and Pete Anderson have worked to get the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau to recognize Falanghina, Brachetto, Coda di Volpe and Lambrusca di Alessandria as varietals. Recognition is a legal requirement to properly label wine - which allows consumers to better understand the varietal. Nevertheless, educating consumers about Cougar's unfamiliar varietals is an ongoing challenge. Jennifer explains, "Opening the tasting room in Temecula, with all of the foot traffic, allowed us to introduce our guests to our rare Italian varietals. BUT there is not one offsite event that we pour at that guests don't ask for our 'Cab' or 'Chardonnay'. It has taken 12 years to finally get recognized for our endeavours and to also see that our varietals are being more widely planted and accepted by the wine growing and purchasing community. These varietals are not like Bordeaux or Rhone varietals. You have to convince the consumer that this is why they are wine tasting... to learn about Italian wines that we believe will grow well in the Temecula terroir."

Inspired by the movie *Bottle Shock*, Cougar matches their wine against comparable Italian producers wine in an annual "Cougar Meets Italy" blind tasting challenge. Guests and professional wine critics discuss and choose their favorites. "We learn something from each year we do this event. Each year we do better compared with our Italian counterparts... We found that our Falanghina consistently wins when compared to wines from the vineyard in Campania where our clone came from!" The 2020 tasting challenge will be held on Thursday, January 16th from 6-9pm. Visit cougarvineyards.com for more information.



"These varietals are not like Bordeaux or Rhone varietals. You have to convince the consumer that this is why they are wine tasting... to learn about Italian wines that we believe will grow well in the Temecula terroir."

JENNIFER BUFFINGTON, OWNER



Palumbo Family Vineyards & Winery Reviews

Hailing from the oldest block on the Palumbo estate is the **2015 “Catfish” Cabernet Franc (EXC)**. True to varietal form, the wine exudes distinct herbaceous, floral, and spicy pepper notes to accompany a swirl of red and black currant fruit. Smooth tannins and notes of cedar, earth, and minerals on the slightly rustic finish. The **2014 Due Figli Sangiovese (VG+)** combines a fruity core of ripe black cherry and dark plums with candied licorice, rose petals, minerals, and roasted herbs. Moderate acids and rounded tannins make it approachable now or it can be cellared for a few years. Stay away from the sweet Temecula rosés and seek out Nick’s fuller bodied blush, the **2017 Rosato Secco (VG+)**. He blends Mourvedre and Grenache to create a balanced and nuanced deep colored rosé with a slightly floral, herbal and earthy profile. The finish hums with minerals, white pepper and a hint of lime zest. The endearing **2015 Due Rossi (VG)** - 75% Sangiovese & 25% Merlot - is already rewarding us with a lovely bouquet of potpourri, smoked herbs, savory earthiness and cherry. The smooth palate showcases Temecula’s best features - dried red fruits, fennel, anise, roast game, tomato leaf, crushed minerals - and Nick’s expert artisanship.

Cougar Vineyards & Winery Reviews

The simple, yet refreshing **2018 Arneis (G)** would be a good introduction to anyone new to these varietals. It’s soft on the palate with delicate flavors of pear, Springtime citrus blossoms and honeysuckle. Love Sauvignon Blanc? Cougar’s **2018 Vermentino (VG)** delivers laser-like notes of green apple and pear, citrus, crushed stones, saline and a zesty finish suited for the beach or by the pool. The **2018 Falanghina (VG+)** provides rich aromatics and fine, interwoven flavors of apple, pear, stony minerals, leafy herbs, jasmine, citrus blossoms and a hint of lemon curd. Sip and savor! Finally, the unique **2015 Lambrusca di Alessandria (VG+)** is a must try for Italian wine lovers and/or serious Oenophiles. This deep ruby colored wine isn’t shy about throwing its fleshy black cherry fruit in your face. Yet, there is depth and complexity - anise, tar and mineral - on the nose and palate. Good balance as a lively acidity supports the sturdy tannins this varietal is known to display. Hints of cocoa, charcoal and savory earth round out the finish. Originally mistaken as Nebbiolo cuttings, Cougar is one of only a handful of LdA growers outside of Italy. In Italy, it’s grown in the Piedmont region and typically blended with Barbera, Dolcetto, Moscato, Bonarda and DOC Langhe Rosso wine to add color, body and tannin. Cougar’s version is 100% varietal - something unlikely to find anywhere.



Cheers to the new owners of Wine On A Dime, Katherine & Brian!

You can find a few of the wines mentioned here, as well as other unique wines and craft beer from all over the World. Pop in to Temecula’s only wine bar and boutique wine store to say hello and sample a few wines.

28061 JEFFERSON AVE., STE. 5, TEMECULA, CA 92590 – WWW.ATTHEDIME.COM

TOP PICKS - WHITE & ROSÉ

2016 Falkner Sauvignon Blanc

Wonderful aromas of cut grass, vanilla cream, grapefruit and key lime pie. The palate delivers a refreshing splash of lemon juice, tropical fruit, melon, baking spices, ginger and a crisp acidity that begs for another Southern California sun soaked afternoon.

EXCELLENT

2018 Lorenzi Estate Brush Strokes

This is a saignée blend of Syrah, Malbec, Cab Sauv, Merlot and Cab Franc. One is immediately bowled over by intense aromas of fresh picked mixed berries, tarragon and violets. Vibrant yet round red fruit on the palate. This medium bodied wine finishes dry with lingering flavors of dried maraschino cherries, wet stones, orange peel, cardamom, and pepper.

VERY GOOD

OTHER WINES

2016 Doffo Motodoffo Gran Tinto (EXC)

2016 Falkner Amante (EXC)

2015 Lorenzi Reserve Syrah (EXC)

2016 Lorenzi La Terra (VG+)

2016 Lorimar Cabernet Sauvignon (VG+)

2016 Miramonte Four Torch Red (VG+)

2017 Wilson Creek Family Reserve Zinfandel (VG+)

2018 Avensole Grace Note (VG)

2018 Danza del Sol Albarino (VG)

2018 Doffo Viognier (VG)

2017 Miramonte Opulente Blanc (VG)

2018 Miramonte Verdelho (VG)

FOR A LIST OF ALL WINES REVIEWED THIS QUARTER, VISIT TEMECULAWINEQUARTERLY.COM

How Do Temecula Wines Compare?



As I have tasted a multitude of Temecula wines over the course of the last year, I have often wondered how does the style and quality of Temecula wine compare to the rest of the World? There is some critical review of Temecula (Matt Kettman, Robert Whitley and small handful of others), but many publications do not or refuse to cover the area. Far too frequently the quality and opinion of Temecula wines suffer from a tourism business that dictates wineries appeal to massive party groups with sweetened sparkling wine, Sangria, Instagram influencer photo ops, and live entertainment. While some critics may not take it serious, there is serious winemaking. And with it comes an opportunity to judge for ourselves how Temecula wines compare.

Temecula wines cover an exceptionally wide spectrum of varietals, price, quality and style. Remarkably, many neighboring wineries grow vastly different varietals which lead to vastly different styles of winemaking. Because of these reasons, great care would have to be given towards selecting the correct wine pairings and wine tasting ground rules. Six varietal pairings would be served. The wines would have to be of similar quality, style or price point. The wines would be served blind — in this case only the varietal(s) would be known. Our nine tasters would vote on which of the two bottles were preferred. Since I had selected and pre-tasted the wines, recusing myself from discussing or voting was appropriate. Voting results would be tabulated and either Temecula or the World would be declared victorious! So, how did Temecula do?

Rosé — 2018 Miramonte Rosé (\$28) & 2017 Chateau Vivonne Bandol Rosé (Bandol, FR - \$17)

Our group of nine tasters selected the Miramonte by a single vote! Both were delicious and selected due to blends of Grenache, Mourvedre, and Cinsault. *Temecula 1 - the World 0*

Sauvignon Blanc — 2018 Akash Winery (\$33) & Massican (Napa, CA - \$30) The entire group was unanimous in our love for the Massican Sauvignon Blanc. Ironically, one of my guests brought a non-blind 2018 Akash Sauvignon Blanc to the tasting. Many were surprised to learn that it was the same wine as the “blind” wine. *Temecula 1 - the World 1*

White Rhone Blend — 2018 Somerset GRV (\$30) & 2016 Pierre-Henri Morel Côtes du Rhône Villages Laudun Blanc (Rhone Valley, FR - \$17) Both wines are a blend of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Viognier. The differences between New World and Old World winemaking techniques and terroir were most apparent between both of these wines. Both were of VERY GOOD quality and most preferred Somerset’s fresh, New World take. *Temecula 2 - the World 1*

Sangiovese — 2015 Robert Renzoni Brunello di Sangiovese (\$45) & 2015 Antinori Chianti Classico Marchese Antinori Riserva Tenuta Tignanello (Tuscany, IT - \$37) 2015 was an excellent vintage in Tuscany. Yet many of the high end offerings are closed down due to high tannins and acidity. Even with an extended decant, the Antinori was no exception. Most preferred the easily accessible Renzoni Brunello for current drinking satisfaction. *Temecula 3 - the World 1*

Cabernet Franc — 2015 Palumbo Family Cabernet Franc Catfish Vineyard (\$54) & 2017 Mascota Vineyards Cabernet Franc La Mascota (Mendoza, ARG - \$15) By a razor’s edge, the crowd preferred the fresh Argentinian Cabernet Franc over Nick Palumbo’s nuanced 2015 Cabernet Franc. This could have gone either way as both were EXCELLENT. *Temecula 3 - the World 2*

Syrah — 2015 Fazeli Cellars Shiraz (\$50) & 2017 Tensley Syrah Colson Canyon Vineyard (Santa Barbera, CA - \$40) Saving the best for last - well maybe the boldest for last - these two big, bad, bold Syrah heavyweights duked it out. But it was Tensley’s complex, powerhouse finish landing a decisive knockout punch to Fazeli’s fruit forward, syrupy 2015 Shiraz. *Temecula 3 - the World 3*

And so our contest ends in a draw. All the wines were fantastic, new favorites were discovered and everyone had fun. It’s fair to say that under the right conditions Temecula style and quality can hold its own weight. As for the pricing, that is a topic that will be addressed in future newsletters.

Cheers! Vino Temecula

OUR RATING SYSTEM

CLASSIC

97-100. The pinnacle of quality.

OUT - Outstanding

94-96. A great wine.

EXC - Excellent

90-93. Exceptional style & quality.

VG - Very Good

87-89. Special qualities.

G - Good

84-86. Solid, well-made

AVG - Average

80-83. Simple, drinkable

NR - Not Rated

+ Signifies a wine of elevated quality within that rating tier

ABOUT THE QUARTERLY

The *Temecula Wine Quarterly* is devoted to the independent discussion on the style and quality of Temecula Valley wines. All wines were tasted as many times possible in a non-blind format during September, October and November of 2019. This is the inaugural edition and hope you have found it educational, interesting and enjoyable. Please contact me with any comments or suggestions.

Richard R. DeLucio, aka *Vino Temecula* (@vinotemecula), has been collecting and tasting wine for over two decades. He is currently a candidate for the WSET Level 3 and holds a WSET 2 with Distinction. Some of his greatest wine memories include tasting multiple vintages of old Barbaresco with Angelo Gaja, attending large Bordeaux horizontal tastings, and sharing amazing bottles of older Vintage Port with great friends. Over the past year Richard has tasted well over 700 bottles of Temecula wine and is hopeful that improvements in viticulture, climate management, winemaking and consumer education will lead to an improvement in quality.

Quality matters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR
TO RECEIVE A PRINT COPY PLEASE

VISIT - TEMECULAWINEQUARTERLY.COM
OR EMAIL - VINOTEMECULA@GMAIL.COM

EXCELLENT

2015 Danza del Sol Petite Sirah (EXC+)
2015 Avensole Solea
2016 Doffo Motodoffo Gran Tinto
2016 Doffo Syrah
2016 Falkner Amante
2016 Falkner Sauvignon Blanc
2015 Fazelli Cellars Ferdowski
2013 Fazelli Cellars Rumi
2015 Lorenzi Reserve Syrah
2015 Lorimar Petite Sirah
2015 Oak Mountain Pinotage
2015 Palumbo Family “Catfish” Cabernet Franc
2015 Robert Renzoni Brunello di Sangiovese

VERY GOOD

2015 Cougar Vineyards Lambrusca di Alessandria (VG+)
2018 Cougar Vineyards Falanghina (VG+)
2016 Lorenzi La Terra (VG+)
2016 Lorimar Cabernet Sauvignon (VG+)
2016 Miramonte Four Torch Red (VG+)
2014 Palumbo Family Due Figli Sangiovese (VG+)
2017 Palumbo Family Rosato Secco (VG+)
2017 Wilson Creek Family Reserve Zinfandel (VG+)
2018 Akash Winery Sauvignon Blanc
2015 Avensole Cabernet Franc
2018 Avensole Grace Note
2015 Cougar Vineyards Cask Reserve Montepulciano
2018 Cougar Vineyards Vermentino
2018 Danza del Sol Albarino
2015 Danza del Sol Meritage
2015 Danza del Sol Super Tuscan
2018 Danza del Sol Vermentino
2018 Doffo Viognier
2014 Doffo Malbec Reserve
2016 Doffo Motodoffo Royal Tinto
2016 Europa Village Monastrell
2016 Europa Village Reserve Tempranillo
2016 Falkner Cabernet Sauvignon - TV
2015 Fazeli Cellars Uproar
2015 Fazeli Cellars Khayam
2015 Fazeli Cellars Hafez 2015 Fazeli Cellars Shiraz
2014 Gershon Bachus Erato Cabernet Franc
2018 Lorenzi Estate Brush Strokes
2012 Lorenzi Estate Old Vine Lopez Ranch Zinfandel
2014 Lorenzi Estate Obsessive
2015 Lorenzi Estate Zinfandel
2016 Lorimar Malbec
2016 Lorimar Meritage
2016 Lorimar Montepulciano
2018 Lorimar Sauvignon Blanc
2015 Lorimar Tempranillo-Barbera
2017 Miramonte Opulente Blanc
2018 Miramonte Rosé
2018 Miramonte Verdelho
2014 Palumbo Winery Cellar Dwellar
2015 Palumbo Family Due Rossi
2015 Palumbo Winery Tre Fratelli “Meritage”
2018 Somerset GRV
2016 South Coast Wild Horse Peak Syrah
2017 Wilson Creek Family Reserve Meritage
2017 Wilson Creek GSM
2016 Vindemia Barbera Riserva
2017 Vindemia Regatta de Blanc

GOOD

2017 Avensole Gewurztraminer (G+)
 2015 Danza Del Sol GSM (G+)
 2017 Falkner Chardonnay - TV (G+)
 2014 Lorenzi Estate Four Play (G+)
 2016 Lorimar Montepulciano (G+)
 2014 Palumbo Winery Bella Vigna Sangiovese (G+)
 2015 South Coast Wild Horse Peak Cabernet Sauvignon (G+)
 2013 South Coast Wild Horse Peak Meritage (G+)
 2016 Wilson Creek Family Reserve Malbec (G+)
 2015 Wilson Creek Family Reserve Zinfandel (G+)
 2014 Avensole Heritage
 2018 Avensole Susan
 2018 Cougar Vineyards Arneis
 2017 Cougar Vineyards Barbera
 2018 Cougar Vineyards Coda di Volpe
 2016 Danza Del Sol Cabernet Franc
 2015 Doffo Mistura
 NV Doffo Port
 2014 Europa Village Reserve Syrah
 2016 Europa Village Sangiovese
 2015 Fazeli Cellars Baba Joon
 2018 Fazeli Cellars Boland Rooz
 2016 Fazeli Cellars Montepulciano
 2014 Fazeli Cellars Phel Phel
 2018 Leoness Cellars Viognier
 2016 Lorimar Barbera
 2018 Miramonte Bin 380
 2015 Miramonte Estate Syrah
 2016 Miramonte Tempranillo
 NV Robert Renzoni Port
 2018 Robert Renzoni Vermentino
 2018 Somerset Roussanne
 2014 South Coast Wild Horse Peak Merlot
 2014 Vindemia Estate Syrah
 2015 Vindemia Petite Jane
 2017 Wilson Creek Winemakers Select Zinfandel

AVERAGE

2018 Avensole Tessa
 2016 Cougar Sangiovese
 2016 Cougar Primitivo
 2015 Danza Del Sol Barbera
 2017 Doffo Cabernet Sauvignon
 2017 Europa Village Garnacha Rosa
 2017 Europa Village Albarino
 2016 Europa Village Reserve Viognier
 2016 Europa Village Muscat Canelli
 2013 Falkner Port
 2018 Fazeli Cellars Riesling
 2014 Fazeli Cellars Mehregan
 2018 Fazeli Cellars Norooz
 NV Lorenzi Estate Syrah Cuvee
 2018 Miramonte Bin 380
 2015 Miramonte Estate Syrah
 2018 Miramonte Moscato
 2014 South Coast Wild Horse Peak Temporale
 2017 Wilson Creek Nebbiolo

NOT RATED

2017 Europa Village Garnacha Rosa
 2017 Fazeli Cellars Chardonnay
 2016 Lorimar Tempranillo
 2016 Lorimar GSM
 2018 Monte de Oro Pinot Gris
 2018 Wilson Creek Cab/Zin