

Dear Doonstah,

It's that time of year again, when a winemaker's thoughts turn to weather forecasts, availability of harvesting crews, and of course, dreams of perfectly balanced, impeccable grapes that do not require heroic levels of winemaking intervention. (A guy can dream now, can't he?)

This has been a rather exciting year, what with the release of the new versions of Cigare, red and white, what we are calling "Cuvée Oumuamua." The critics seem to have responded very favorably, wholesalers also seeming quite excited about the wine, to the extent that wholesalers get excited by much these days', and we'll just have to see how the market in general responds. But, in my mind at least, both Vermentino, (the salient player in the white), and Cinsault, (the salient component in the red) are both ready for their star turns in the California wine scene. They both arguably make exceptionally tasty wines at lower potential alcoholic degrees, and both have reasonably good drought and heat tolerance, making them excellent, sustainable choices for an indisputably changing planet.

We had a very tough year at Popelouchum with powdery mildew, (as did many). For reasons too complicated (and painful) to get into, we were unable to get in to spray our prophylactic stylet oil on the vines as often as we really needed to, so we are looking at a rather dramatic doon-turn in volume. But the vines themselves have grown well in the absence of irrigation, and it appears that dry-farming at Popelouchum is not an entirely far-fetched idea. The "varietal auto-tuning" project that we initiated with the sérine seedlings is going very great guns, and we've observed frankly totally unexpected amounts of growth in some of the plants - some as much as three to four meters in length - from plants that were just seeds two years ago! As I may have mentioned previously, grapes grown from seeds behave somewhat differently than vegetatively propagated vines; they need to achieve a certain amount of growth before they send the hormonal signal to end juvenility and begin producing fruit. I had imagined that this process would take us perhaps six or seven years, but I think we should be seeing fruit on many of the vines as early as next year, and perhaps we'll find a particularly distinctive sérine x sérine seedling. (This is an unbelievably cool development.) As I've also mentioned, it is my intention to reiterate this self-crossing technique with the variety known as Rosseese this year, hopefully with equally

successful results.

It has been our intention at Popelouchum to make wines in as "natural" a fashion as possible. A quick report on the 2018 Grenache Blanc/Grenache Gris cuvée. It's still fermenting! (though by all reckoning, almost doon.) No need to rush things along here. The wine is still totally clean and utterly delicious; I have no idea how we will ever get it to undergo malolactic fermentation, especially as the weather begins to cool down this fall, but we'll worry about one thing at a time.

This final DEWN shipment of the year is truly special - a double shipment for many of - a bit like a double album - somewhat conceptual, but *au fond*, a treasure trove all the same. There are some superb wines in the collection. It's a bit of meditation on blanc de noir, some very cool pinks in this bunch, and some great reds as well. The Cinsaut from the venerable Bechtold Vyd. - don't get me started.

It is always such a great pleasure to connect with you, loyal DEWNstahs. It has been quite a remarkable adventure that we are on, *n'est-ce pas?*

Yours in Autumnal Delight,

*Rendall*

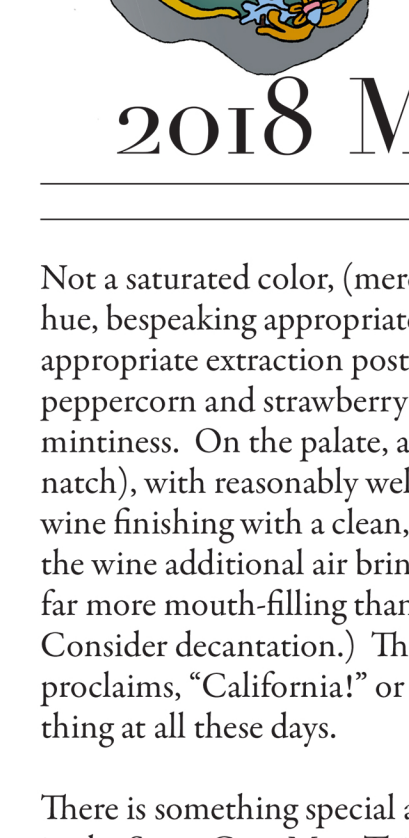


Illustration and Design by Sarah Williams

## 2018 Merlot, "Zayante Vineyard"

Not a saturated color, (mercifully), but a medium-ruby hue, bespeaking appropriate maturity level at harvest and appropriate extraction post-ripeness. The fragrance of pink peppercorn and strawberry with a non-trivial amount of peppermint. On the palate, a beautiful acidity (all natural, natch), with reasonably well resolved, soft tannins, and the wine finishing with a clean, long finish. But, wait! Giving the wine additional air brings more volume to the wine; it's far more mouth-filling than upon opening. (Suggestion: Consider decantation.) There is little about this wine that proclaims, "California!" or "2019!" And this is not a bad thing at all these days.

There is something special about bordelais grapes grown in the Santa Cruz Mts. This wine in fact is a bit of a time-machine, harkening to an earlier, less self-conscious era of the wine industry in California, when winemakers made wines to please themselves, rather than trying to make wines that they reckoned would be commercially acceptable or sexy. (Does this oak treatment make my butt look pHar?) Organically farmed, dry-farmed vines from high in the Santa Cruz Mountains in the hippie trippy Zayante area. (Growing grapes there is real no picnic with the intense avian and deer pressure. The degree of bird pressure is often a salient consideration in when grapes in the Santa Cruz Mountains are harvested.)

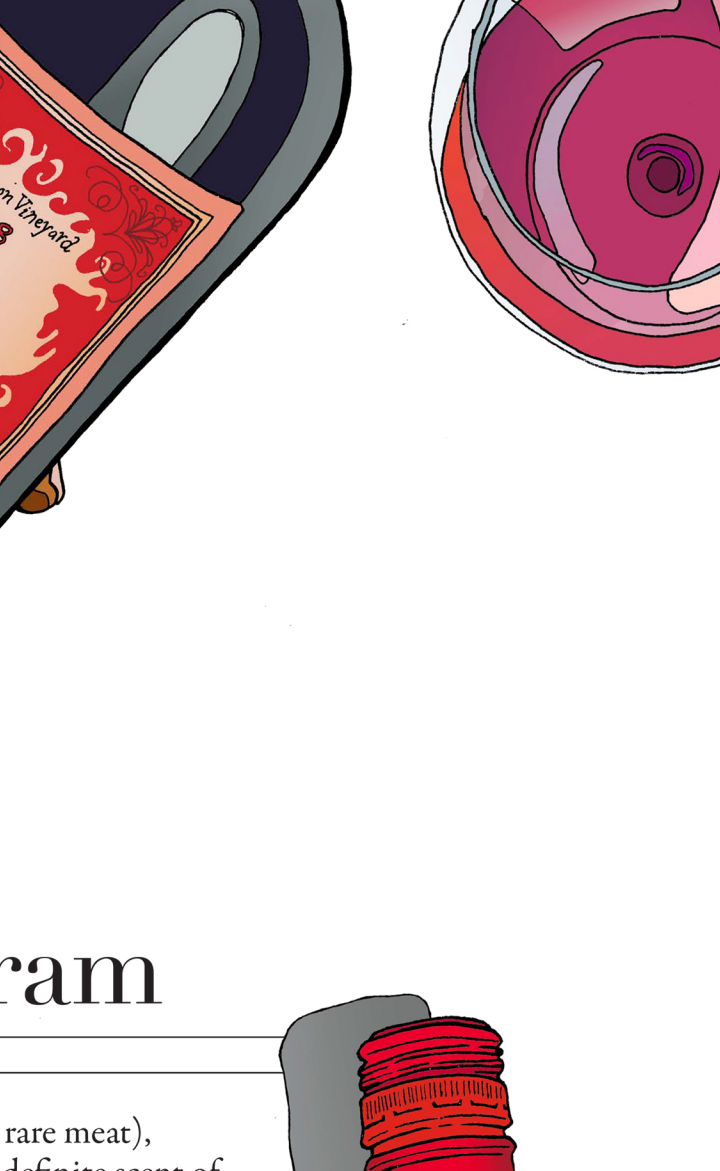
Standard BDV red wine protocol. Approximately 25% non-stemmed fruit, a cold pre-soak and hand-punched down in small 1/2 ton bins with a 30 day/30 night maceration. The wine matured in older puncheon with minimal racking and not filtered.

1 A "butt" is an actual vinous thing, to wit, an approximately 500 gallon oak barrel, typically used for the storage of sherry.

**Food Pairing:** Rib-eye steak, flank steak or pork tenderloin au jus. Mashed du Vin

**Statistics:**  
**VARIETAL BLEND:** 100% Merlot  
**APPELLATION:** Santa Cruz Mountains  
**VINEYARD DESIGNATION:** Zayante Vineyard  
**PRODUCTION:** 167 cases  
**SERVING TEMPERATURE:** 58° F  
**TA:** 5.6g/L  
**pH:** 3.58  
**OPTIMAL DRINKABILITY:** Now - 2026  
**LABEL ARTIST:** Grady McFerrin  
**ALCOHOL:** 13.4%

**RETAIL PRICE:** \$34  
**CLUB PRICE:** \$28.90



## 2018 Old Telegram

From the nose, one scents licorice, blood(!) (make that very rare meat), blackberries (both berry and leaf), and wet earth. There is a definite scent of beef bouillon, one of the absolute true signifiers of (proper) Mourvèdre. On the palate, the tannins are soft, with almost a sense of sweetness (emphatically no R.S. in this), but with a really vibrant acidity and very great length. We somehow skirted the peril of over-ripeness and raisination, which is always a bit of a peril in the sunny climes of Antioch, CA. The wine is rich but also quite elegant at the same time.

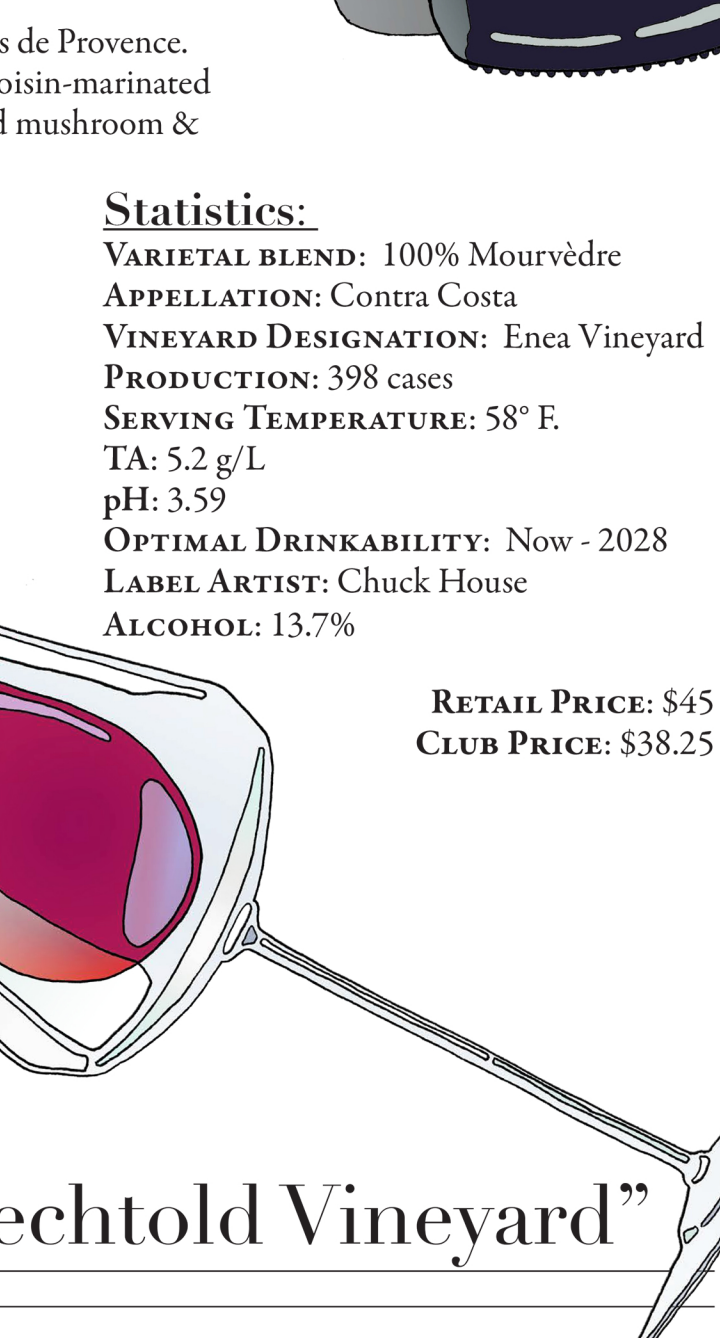
We have purchased grapes from the Enea Vineyard in the sandy terroirs of Antioch for many years and have always found this shy-yielding vineyard to ripen as much as two weeks earlier than the other Mourvèdre vines in the neighborhood. I suspect that there is substantially less clay underlying the sand, resulting in diminished water-holding capacity and hence a bit more hydrologic stress on the vines, with resultant concentration in the fruit itself. A high percentage of sand in the soil limits the viability of phylloxera, and these very old (100+ year) vines have never seen rootstock.

Now it can be told. As much as we love the fruit from the Enea vineyard - it is always the most concentrated and vibrant Mourvèdre we see - we have been habitually plagued by some of the ambient bacterial flora that hitches a ride along with the grapes. As a result, even with reasonable use of SO<sub>2</sub>, we have with almost vintage seen volatile acidity levels mount during and immediately after fermentation. Not that a little bit of VA is necessarily a bad thing, but these grapes represented a unique challenge. This vintage we experimented with a technique of ozone treatment of the grapes before harvest, wiping out the indigenous microflora and then inoculating both with cultured yeast and malolactic culture. I am as much for doing things naturally whenever possible, but in this instance, our enological intervention was certainly the wiser course. Volatile acidity well in hand without the need for major SO<sub>2</sub> additions. Success!

**Food Pairing:** Wine-braised lamb shanks with herbes de Provence. Enoki mushroom tempura with soy-based dipping sauce. Hoisin-marinated chicken breasts served with wild & brown rice medley. Wild mushroom & thyme pizza. Pork shoulder. Beef short ribs

**Statistics:**  
**VARIETAL BLEND:** 100% Mourvèdre  
**APPELLATION:** Contra Costa  
**VINEYARD DESIGNATION:** Enea Vineyard  
**PRODUCTION:** 398 cases  
**SERVING TEMPERATURE:** 58° F  
**TA:** 5.2g/L  
**pH:** 3.59  
**OPTIMAL DRINKABILITY:** Now - 2028  
**LABEL ARTIST:** Chuck House  
**ALCOHOL:** 13.7%

**RETAIL PRICE:** \$45  
**CLUB PRICE:** \$38.25



## 2018 Cinsaut, "Bechtold Vineyard"

Sheer happiness in a glass. Everything about this wine is just right. The color is an enchanting ruby hue, and upon pouring, the fragrance explosively leaps out of the glass. Cherries and mulberries, most significantly with a slightly pungent peppery, strawberry kicker. On the palate, weightless elegance, at the same time showing extreme persistence. This wine charms the way the brilliant wines of Jura do. The wine is attempting to sublime into the etheric realm, yet rooted with a sort of doon-to-earthiness that can only come from grapes borne by very, very old vines.

What can be said about this extraordinary vineyard that hasn't been said already? We've been privileged to work with these grapes for the last 25 years or so, albeit in ever-diminishing volume (that's another story altogether), indeed it seems that RG was the first in modern times to make the definitive varietal identification. (Grapes formerly shipped as "Red grapes). Oh well, this vineyard is very old (maybe the oldest in California), wise, and the great coolth of the vintage year yielded perfectly ripe grapes that still maintained impeccable freshness and vitality.

Standard BDV red winemaking procedure, i.e. a brief cold soak (with the magic of dry ice), hand punched down in small 1/2 ton bins, with a cuvaison of approximately 30 days.

**Food Pairing:** Can be paired with virtually anything that Burgundy might complement, viz. game birds, wild mushroom ragout, etc.

**Statistics:**  
**VARIETAL BLEND:** Cinsaut (Cinsault)  
**APPELLATION:** Lodi  
**VINEYARD DESIGNATION:** Bechtold Vineyard  
**PRODUCTION:** 317 cases  
**SERVING TEMPERATURE:** 58° F  
**TA:** 5.3g/L  
**pH:** 3.65  
**OPTIMAL DRINKABILITY:** Now - 2028  
**LABEL ARTIST:** Grady McFerrin  
**ALCOHOL:** 13.4%

**RETAIL PRICE:** \$42  
**CLUB PRICE:** \$35.70



## 2018 Vin Gris Réserve

Rather pale color (remember this was pressed very lightly). Exceptionally concentrated with a soft, mouth-coating, creamy texture, bolstered by a firm but not oppressive acidity. Nose of apricots and strawberries, maybe even hubarb, and a very slight herbal note (tarragon?) This wine will live longer than all of us.

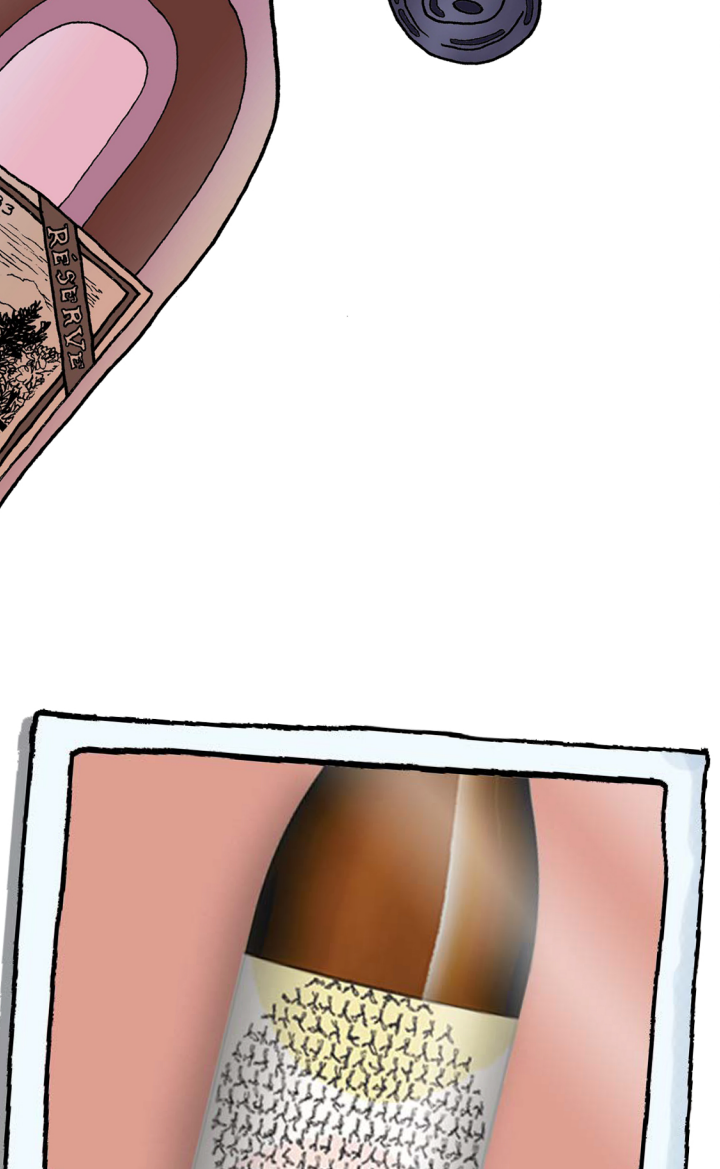
The Texas Ranch on the west side of Paso Robles was exposed to some incredibly warm temperatures during the growing season, in addition to being chronically short of available moisture. (The vineyard typically has very little water with which to irrigate, so this is something rather akin to "dry-farming" by default. As a result, we observed that the normal developmental cycle of the grapes (both Grenache and Mourvèdre) was disrupted and the vineyard ended up with essentially Lilliputian-sized clusters - not raisinated, mind you - just incredibly dense and intensely flavored. We made the decision to make the wine as a pink rather than as a red, to conserve the brilliant natural acidity of the wine (the acidity seemed to be concentrated along with everything else). The vineyard owner had to be very pleased with the abundant rain that followed the vintage into the spring.

As mentioned, these clusters were perhaps the smallest grape clusters I have ever observed, and as a result, they were essentially all skin and very little juice. We pressed the grapes as gently and lightly as could be reasonably be effected (whole cluster pressing) with no skin contact at all, if for no other reason but to eschew astringency, and as a result, we ended up with a scandalously low juice yield. On the brighter side, the juice didn't require much settling as there were very low solids from the get-go; the fermentation was conducted in old, neutral puncheons in a cool cellar and went rather slowly. Malolactic fermentation was conducted along with non-trivial lees-stirring to enhance textural complexity.

**Food Pairing:** Aioli monstre, scallops, lobster

**Statistics:**  
**VARIETAL BLEND:** 62% Grenache, 38% Mourvèdre  
**APPELLATION:** Paso Robles  
**VINEYARD DESIGNATION:** Texas Ranch  
**PRODUCTION:** 333 cases  
**SERVING TEMPERATURE:** 48° F  
**TA:** 5.8g/L  
**pH:** 3.58  
**OPTIMAL DRINKABILITY:** Now - 2025  
**LABEL ARTIST:** Chuck House  
**ALCOHOL:** 13.5%

**RETAIL PRICE:** \$26  
**CLUB PRICE:** \$22.10



2018 Grenache Blanc



2018 Grenache Blanc/Cinsaut

What is perhaps most captivating about this wine is the minty/anise aroma that Grenache Blanc evinces when grown on the coolest sites. Refreshing, zesty acidity with suggestions of citrus zest. This is not your Father's zaftig and slightly fulsome Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc.

Edna Valley is one of the coolest places where Grenache of any stripe is grown, and as such, allows GB to achieve wonderful natural acidities and extremely bright flavors. The slightly strange magnesium-rich soils of Edna seem to stunt vine growth ever so slightly, sometimes delaying maturity.

Stainless steel fermentation, cultured yeast.

**Food Pairing:** Sushi rolls (with real, proper wasabi)

**Statistics:**  
**VARIETAL BLEND:** 100% Grenache Blanc  
**APPELLATION:** Edna Valley  
**VINEYARD DESIGNATION:** Paragon Vineyard  
**PRODUCTION:** 439 cases  
**SERVING TEMPERATURE:** 48° F  
**TA:** 5.4g/L  
**pH:** 3.34  
**OPTIMAL DRINKABILITY:** Now - 2024  
**LABEL ARTIST:** Chris Freire  
**ALCOHOL:** 14.5%

**RETAIL PRICE:** \$24  
**CLUB PRICE:** \$20.40

**Food Pairing:** Seafood risotto, oysters, calamari fritti

**Statistics:**  
**VARIETAL BLEND:** 56% Grenache Blanc, 27% Grenache, 17% Cinsaut  
**APPELLATION:** Monterey County  
**VINEYARD DESIGNATION:** 56% Beeswax Vineyard, 44% Loma del Rio Vineyard  
**PRODUCTION:** 189 cases  
**SERVING TEMPERATURE:** 48° F  
**TA:** 5.2g/L  
**pH:** 3.54  
**OPTIMAL DRINKABILITY:** Now - 2025  
**LABEL ARTIST:** Christine Colin-Ostertag  
**ALCOHOL:** 13.5%

**RETAIL PRICE:** \$22  
**CLUB PRICE:** \$18.70

