

gros ventre cellars

# QUARTERLY NEWS

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## OUR WINTER RELEASE IS LIVE, AND WE ARE OPEN!

We're very happy to introduce you to our new release wines, including the first releases of 2020 (two of the good things that 2020 brought) and the third vintage of our North Coast Pinot Noir, the 2018. To view your allocation, visit [www.grosventrecellars.com](http://www.grosventrecellars.com) and enjoy **free shipping on 6 or more bottles.**

**YES, WE'RE OPEN!** Sheltered from rain but open to the outdoors, our private tastings are perfect for right now. Email us at [info@grosventrecellars.com](mailto:info@grosventrecellars.com) for reservations. We'd love to see you!



## INTRODUCING OUR NEW RELEASES

### 2020 El Dorado Vermentino, \$28

The 2020 Vermentino is a fresh and focused wine, picked a bit less ripe than its 2019 counterpart and aged in 67% stainless steel. Vintage variation always has the most impact on Vermentino year over year, but subtle changes in harvest and fermentation impacts this varietal more than most. It offers aromas of orchard fruit, meyer lemon, and white flowers, with lingering acidity that invites another sip. This wine pairs well with light salads, fresh sashimi and day drinking with friends via zoom.

### 2020 Gamay Noir Rosé, \$26

Our 2020 Rosé is comprised entirely from Gamay Noir grown at high elevation in El Dorado. We've longed to make this Gamay-only wine for years, but never had enough Gamay grapes. The 2020 wildfires afforded us the opportunity to make something beautiful from something terrible, allowing us to crush more Gamay for purposeful Rosé. It's pale pink in color, with aromatics of orange peel, carnations, strawberry, and hints of herbs and watermelon rind. This fresh rendition has vibrant acidity that pairs well with a Covid-friendly picnic and a bucket of fried chicken.

### 2018 North Coast Pinot Noir, \$44

Since day one, we've made Pinot Noir from the Anderson Valley and Sonoma Coast, but it wasn't until 2016 that we combined the two regions and produced our first North Coast Pinot Noir. While most of the fruit is grown within a 20 mile area, it spans different county lines, ridgetops, rivers, and appellations. The resulting wine combines the best of both worlds to make a distinctive Pinot unlike any other we produce. It is medium-bodied with a broad mid-palate, cleansing finish, and aromas of dark cherry, strawberry, sage, anise, and dried rose petals. Don't hesitate to enjoy this wine straightaway with a variety of dishes any night of the week.

We have a handful of other wines also still available, including the last vintage we'll ever make of Cerise Vineyard Pinot noir - the 2018. This is a gorgeous wine, here now, but never again.

**Please check out your allocation for all wines by logging into your account at [www.grosventrecellars.com](http://www.grosventrecellars.com).**

## A MESSAGE FROM CHRIS AND SARAH

Hello Dear Friends,

As we write, a torrential rain is falling, and it's music to our ears. It's been a dry year so far and every drop is welcome. February is a period of dormancy in the vineyard, but also a time when things slowly start to wake up, show life, and begin anew. It seems like a good metaphor for where we are mentally, today... and what we hope will be happening in our own lives.

In the winery, Chris has been spending a lot of time conducting what we call "blending trials." Coming up with the best blends for a given vintage is a feat that requires deep concentration, an open mind, and fastidious spreadsheets to translate the trials to the bottle. Envision a 1,000 piece puzzle where every piece needs to fit to complete the picture. Chris pulls samples from each lot, starting with hundreds of potential permutations, and narrows them down little by little over several days and numerous rounds. As we write, the final touches on the 2019 Pinots are being made, while the first wines of 2020 are coming together in the form of our whites and Rosé, just in time for bottling.

Bottling... the word sends shivers down our spines. Getting new labels printed correctly (and on time!) and making sure the glass, labels, corks, packaging, bottling truck, employees, etc. are all in the right place at the right time is one of the most stressful parts of the vintage, and also a point of no return. Once the wine is in the bottle, there's no going back. Wish us luck!

In the vineyard, the vines are dormant, and pruning is the order of the day. Check out Zach's column on that front further in this letter.

On the homefront, we have kept things together, in spite of the challenges of 2020. While our restaurant business met a huge downturn due to pandemic closures, our wonderful customers (new and old) have kept the home fires burning. We celebrated the one-year anniversary of our first employee (Zach) in January and wonder how we ever got along without him. We were also excited to welcome a new California distributor (Estate Wines, LTD.) last month. Chris has been a huge fan of their portfolio for over 25 years, starting during his retail and restaurant days. This partnership will help us expand our presence across the state. We also tackled virtual tastings and have found that they offer something unique and good - a way to connect people to ourselves and others, even when we're far apart.

Of all the past year's difficulties, the saddest for us was the diagnosis of Sarah's beloved dad with advanced renal cancer in October. The pandemic has complicated so many things... coming together as a family to help, love, and support Sarah's parents while keeping them safe has been a challenge, one we know you all are also experiencing as you navigate whatever life has thrown at you over the past few months. A light in the darkness was the news that both of them were able to receive the Covid vaccine last week. We're hopeful that we'll be able to safely come together as a family more in the months to come. Our own struggles make us all the more aware of the loss so many have experienced this year. In spite of it all, we continue to experience goodness, light, music and love. We are constantly amazed at the enthusiasm, class, intellect, and kindness of our customers. We hope you all have been able to experience good things lately too.

Thank you, as always, for your support. We appreciate each and every one of you.

Cheers,  
Sarah and Chris

# THINK WHILE YOU DRINK: PRUNING

By Zach Turner



**Baranoff Vineyard, Sebastopol**

It's winter, the dawn of a new year, and here in Sonoma County that means pruning season has arrived! This is the time when we bundle up and take to the vineyards with our trusty, Swiss shears to make big decisions about the upcoming vintage. Pruning allows us to control the yield of the vine, and ultimately the quality of the wine. It's a crucial first step in our quest to make wine from the best fruit possible.

By now the vines have been dormant for some time, essentially nestled in for their winter's nap. It's our job to go around and give them neat little haircuts while they rest, as I did recently in our Baranoff Vineyard (pictured above, pre-haircut). Pruning is one way we attempt to help the plant stay in balance with itself. We examine each vine's performance from the previous year to determine how much fruit it can healthfully support. Then we decide what should be removed from the plant in order to help it thrive and use its energy optimally.

In our vineyards we select only the best cane or two from each individual vine to produce grapes for the next harvest. That means we end up cutting several canes from each plant during pruning. From the two canes that remain, we choose buds to save based on where we want next year's fruit to grow and how much. Then we cut off all the rest of the buds. In the spring the buds we keep will send bright green shoots straight up toward the sun. Leaves and tiny clusters will begin to grow from the shoots, and from the clusters, flowers, and from the flowers, grapes.

We strive to keep vines in balance because it's the best way to produce wines of balance. If we ask the vine to give us more fruit than it should, the resulting wine can be flabby and overly simple, seemingly watered down. If we don't allow the vine to produce enough fruit, it can overcompensate and send its energy elsewhere, potentially producing canopy or mold issues, or vegetal flavors in wine. So, we work to hear what each vine is telling us about its own particular sweet spot. We strive to nudge it ever closer to its potential with each new vintage. And pruning is the reset button. The promise of a fresh start, like a New Year's resolution between grower and vine.

## FUN WITH PAIRINGS

Our personal twist on what pairs well with our wines.

### PRETTY AND SERIOUS

#### Gros Ventre 2018 North Coast Pinot Noir + Taylor Swift's Folklore / Evermore Albums

Yes, 2020 was awful in a myriad of ways. But there were a whole lot of good things that came out of it. Scaling back our crazy schedules. Spending more time together. Enjoying nature. And... Taylor Swift's 2 pandemic albums, released in a span of less than 6 months.

The last year hit us all in different ways. Some of us had more downtime, some of us had less. Many of us learned new things (sourdough starters, homeschooling, virtual wine tastings). For Taylor Swift and her collaborators (including Bon Iver and Aaron Dessner of The National, some of Chris' favorites) it was a creative, beautiful, musical outpouring, and we are the lucky ones.



Many of you are no doubt fans of these albums already. For those of you less familiar, Taylor was a teen country star, then a pop star... always fun and fresh and a bit underestimated. Over the years, she has kept evolving, and in our opinion just keeps getting better. Jane (age 8) and Sarah (somewhat older) cherish each of her albums. Jane's first (and last) musical performance in early March 2020 was a TS song, and both she and Sarah sing and play several on the piano. And so, in the midst of all the darkness over the last year, having Taylor release not just one, but two surprise albums, was an incredible gift. Better yet, they're complicated and wistful and melodious and different... We have listened to both repeatedly, learning the lyrics, piecing them out on the piano, and working on learning the harmonies so we can sing duets. They're real albums, with a creative thread connecting them, meant to be listened to all the way through. Katherine Miller (Buzzfeed) speaks for us when she says: "2020 will be one of the worst years of most of our lives. Which is why I think it might be hard to explain to someone who wasn't here for it why – for the people who really connected with Folklore and Evermore – these albums hit even harder and bigger than maybe the sum of their parts." Needless to say, we really connected.

A proper pairing for these two albums calls for something complex but pretty, different but familiar, woodsy, fresh, best enjoyed in a stone cottage, by the fire, while wearing a cable knit sweater. Our 2018 North Coast Pinot Noir is just the thing. Blended from West Sonoma Coast, Russian River, and Anderson Valley vineyards, the grapes were shrouded in fog and surrounded by redwoods. Just a little sunshine every day went a long way towards making this wine approachable, while still interesting and layered. It is for swirling, savoring, and enjoying. We hope you do just that. And when Sarah and Jane finally figure out the piano version of "Willow", maybe we'll send out a recording.

Stream Folklore and Evermore on Amazon Music, Spotify -- just about anywhere! Order the 2018 North Coast Pinot Noir at [www.grosventrecellars.com](http://www.grosventrecellars.com). Enjoy!

### JOIN THE CLUB

Our club is dedicated to providing members with greater access, deeper knowledge, and greater enjoyment of our wines. Member benefits include four allocations a year, free shipping, special member pricing, and VIP privileges and invitations.

Learn more at [www.grosventrecellars.com/clubs](http://www.grosventrecellars.com/clubs)