

gros ventre cellars

QUARTERLY NEWS

HAAARRRVESST!!!

OK, as of this writing, it's not exactly harvest yet, but it's so close we can almost taste it. We mistakenly said to someone, "It's the calm before the storm," and then corrected ourselves to say that actually, it's the crazy before the storm. Crazy because we're finishing our summer travels, getting the rest of the wines in the barrel, getting the kids back to school, fulfilling a really big national order, and cranking out the Harvest Release. And that's the reason for this missive - the wines of which we speak are in your package, your order is complete, and you have trusted us yet again with your incredible good taste and discerning palate. Thank you, thank you, for choosing Gros Ventre!

We've released some wonderful wines this time around (more on that in the pages to come). May you enjoy every drop.

THE 2025 VINTAGE PREVIEW: DARE WE SAY GOLDILOCKS?

If you live in Northern California, you've been along for the ride on what has been the mildest, most pleasant summer we can recall. In fact, there have been just five days over 90 this year, and none in the triple digits (as of today). This is the coldest summer on record in San Francisco since 1965.

We're always grateful for the marine layer here in the summer - the cool air that moves in off the ocean, bringing us chilly evenings and morning fog that burns off by afternoon. But this year there has been "persistent low pressure in the upper atmosphere" that has made the marine layer even stronger and means we have not used our air conditioner all summer long. It has been an absolute joy.

Winemakers like to call this kind of growing season a "goldilocks" situation. Not too hot, not too cold, but just right. The vines thrive in this weather. They don't experience stress from heat, yet it's warm enough to ripen the grapes slowly and evenly. There's even a mild heat spike forecasted that could be the icing on a perfect cake. Strike that - did we just say perfect?? We're a superstitious bunch and don't want to jinx it. So we will revise our statement to say: we don't know what the next few weeks will bring, but for the moment, things are looking good.

IT'S GOOD WEATHER FOR WINE TASTING, TOO

There's almost nothing more beautiful in life than sitting in a golden vineyard setting tasting wine with friends on a lovely fall day. And have you read the recent studies showing that even more important than exercise, money, or any medication to one's happiness and longevity is the strength of your relationships with other humans? So, grab some humans, book a tasting with us, order some charcuterie and take the afternoon off. You won't regret it. Email us at info@grosventrecellars.com for availability.



THE NEW WINES



THE FLAGSHIP PINOT

First Born is the pinnacle of our Pinot program — a barrel selection from the best lots of each vintage. Past releases have earned up to 97 points from Vinous, and the 2023 follows in that tradition: layered, complex, and intensely expressive. Comprised of only 3 barrels, this Pinot is always the most anticipated and coveted wine that we produce. The 2023 vintage is built to last and giving it some time in the cellar before drinking will bring more nuance and polish.



HELLO, CHENIN

Chenin blanc is having a moment. With its versatility, high acidity and natural balance, we understand why. We're proud to bring you one of the standout examples of domestic Chenin today — our 2024 Clarksburg Chenin Blanc. It's crisp, medium-bodied, and so pleasurable. Notes of pear skin, lemon pith, and white blossoms shine through a lens of structure and clarity. Pairs well with lots of food, but we'll highlight how well it plays with Asian foods (always a difficult pairing) like Vietnamese shrimp spring rolls with fresh herbs, rice paper, and dipping sauce matching the wine's aromatic side.



PASSE-TOUT-WHAT?

We created our High Country Red as a nod to Burgundy's Passe tout grains — a blend of Pinot Noir and Gamay that's all about balance, lift, and drinkability. Originally sourced from high-elevation vineyards, it now comes from choice sites along the Sonoma Coast. The Gamay brings freshness and spice, while the Pinot brings fruit and polish to the blend. This wine always punches above its weight class, offering complexity and value to these fickle varieties.

FUN WITH PAIRINGS

2024 GROS VENTRE CHENIN BLANC AND CHATGPT

By Sarah Pittenger

At the risk of stating an unpopular point of view, and/or contributing to the future robot takeover of the world and the demise of humanity, I had to share a favorite pairing of mine as of late... a glass of wine and a deep dive into everything I want to know about it, using AI. For this exercise, our 2024 Chenin Blanc will do nicely, but don't hesitate to try this with any wine. There is so much to learn, and so much at our fingertips.

I realize my daily use of AI makes me somewhat of an odd duck for my demographic. Perhaps it's a comment on the state of my own brain, but I've jumped into using AI with both feet. I find it extremely useful for a wide variety of tasks, from reading and summarizing proposals and legal documents, to fixing my printer (or really anything that's not working), asking questions like, "Why does everybody care about that CEO on the kisscam at the Coldplay concert?," updating Excel spreadsheets, creating New Yorker-style cartoons featuring Chris, making travel time estimations, giving it the ingredients in my fridge to come up with dinner, and loads more... And with regards to wine, AI is a font of knowledge gathered from all recesses of the internet. It's not always right, and I don't always agree, it can be cheesy and overly flattering, but it's pretty darn good. So pour yourself a glass, visit ChatGPT.com (or your favorite AI provider) and ask it a few questions (ideas below).

PROMPTS TO TRY:

Why do people say Chenin blanc is having a moment?

What characteristics should I look for in a Chenin blanc?

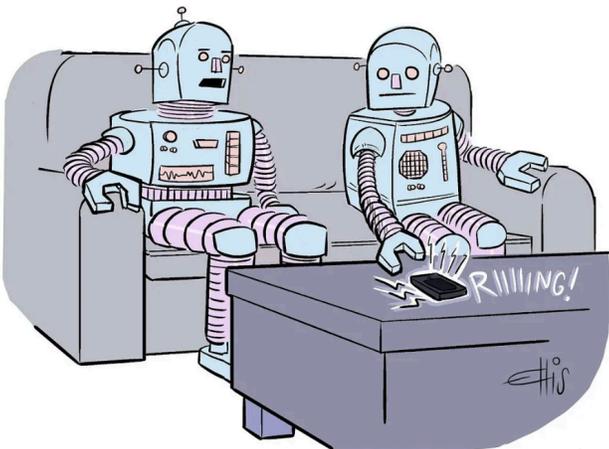
Tell me some gossip about Chenin.

Right now, I'm drinking a Gros Ventre Cellars Chenin Blanc from Clarksburg. Any comments on Clarksburg for Chenin? Keep it brief.

Give me a few tips for how to best savor this wine in my glass right now.

What should I have for dinner that pairs well with the 2024 Gros Ventre Chenin blanc?

What music should I listen to with this dinner? I feel like relaxing, and I don't want the music to overtake the conversation.



"Leave it, it's probably some human."



I pasted this column into ChatGPT and asked it for its own comment. It said, "Being paired with wine? I'll take it. You bring the aromas, textures, and acidity, I'll bring the trivia, pairing ideas, and the occasional bad joke. Together, we're like goat cheese and Chenin—unexpected, but it works."

Eyeball. (And apologies - I never said it had a good personality)

For those of you who are anti-AI (a viewpoint I completely understand and weirdly support), I hope you don't judge me too harshly for my enjoyment and adoption.

And on Chris' behalf, I should add: *The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views, positions, or policies of Gros Ventre Cellars, LLC, its members, managers, or affiliates.*



THE REAL DIRT

By Chris Pittenger

Sarah asked me to give you all the “real dirt” behind the three new wines in the harvest release. So, here you go – the dirt behind these wines.

When we’re deciding which wines to make, it usually starts with either an idea or an opportunity. If it’s an idea – it’s like, “I love this wine – can we make something similar?” Or, it’s: “I found a great vineyard – can we make this work?” The story of these three wines is a mix of both.

Why Chenin Blanc?

I fell for it in my restaurant days, when I wandered into a new world of whites, including Chenin, Riesling, and Grüner—crisp, aromatic whites that love food. So, in 2017, when it came time to make our first white wine (after 8 years of making only red), we liked Chenin over Chardonnay (even though Chard was more in line with the Burgundian Pinot Noir we started out with). Chenin had everything we wanted: acid, weight, aromatics and structure without feeling too big. The vineyard we’ve been working with ever since is organic and sustainable and delivers ridiculous value and pleasure. (it’s nice to be able to offer an organic, small production white at only \$30/bottle as opposed to a much pricier Chardonnay). These days, Chenin is sort of a cool kid with certain crowds. I’m glad we were making it back when we just wanted a delicious Chenin to drink.

What in the world... Passe Tout Grains?

I got into Passe Tout Grains (PTG) while studying for the Advanced Sommelier exam as a restaurant server in Jackson Hole, when my tips couldn’t fund a Grand Cru Burgundy habit. PTG, often made by iconic Burgundy producers, delivered the goods at a fraction of the price (because Pinot blended with Gamay wasn’t “regal” enough for classic Burgundy pricing). So when we started making Gamay in 2016, blending in Pinot was a no-brainer. High Country Red is my PTG-inspired nod to those days: delicious, versatile, and priced so wine geeks of all ages and income can enjoy it without breaking the bank. We can’t use the name “Passe Tout Grains” because it’s a regionally protected term in France (like “Champagne”) and by law, only wines made in that specific French appellation can put it on the label. We came up with the name “High Country Red” because at the time, all the fruit was from high elevation vineyards in El Dorado. Almost no other domestic winery makes PTG, probably because Pinot is too valuable to blend with Gamay. But as an independent, self-funded winery we get to make the calls – and thankfully, you guys love to drink it.

How did the First Born Pinot Noir come about?

We started our family and our winery in the middle of the ’09 recession, which made every decision feel bigger. When I found a vineyard perfectly suited for world-class Pinot, Sarah was excited—until I added the catch: it was our most expensive fruit and also under an NDA that wouldn’t allow us to disclose the vineyard name. It was too freaking good to pass up, so we gave it a proprietary name: First Born. That curve ball actually ended up being a great thing. Because we’ve never been limited by the required 95% fruit to be a vineyard designate wine, I’ve always had the freedom to blend and explore, pulling from the best blocks across the Sonoma Coast each year to build a Pinot that captures everything we love about the vintage. What began as a risk has become our most highly-rated, coveted wine and my favorite to make. I hope you enjoy it too!



Famous West Sonoma Coast Goldridge Soils (admittedly this photo doesn’t pertain to this article at all, except that this is “real dirt” - and awesome for the vines!

SEE YA ON THE OTHER SIDE OF HARVEST!!

*Chris
Sarah*