



Merry Monks

Wine Club of Cantiga Wineworks



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25 Years of Winemaking Bliss: Building Dreams

Spring of 2003 was a time for birth. The first new life to arrive was our daughter, Anneke, launching us into life's greatest adventure of parenthood. The second, the planting of our estate vineyard, came after a year of gestation: examining topo maps and sun patterns, selecting rootstock and grapevine clones, mapping layouts, and tilling the deep granitic soils.

By fall, we took up residence on the property. Now fully settled onsite, we could work in close partnership with our vineyard manager, Rick Wickham, tending the baby vines.

Several days a week, we made the hour-long commute to Lockeford so we could work with our wine and run our tasting room on weekends. A pack-n-play was set up in the back, so baby Anneke could nap while we worked. Between naps, she was often passed around among delighted customers. A lively trade began to build around the Vino Piazza, which appealed to tasters who could park and visit a dozen boutique wineries in an afternoon. Each winery had its own distinctive personality, with piano music emanating from Watts Winery (Craig Watts was always ready to entertain his customers), and an extensive fossil collection on display at the Olde Lockeford Winery. Our own tasting room was reminiscent of a medieval chapel, its stone walls draped with tapestries and candlelight. Special events would be a facility-wide effort, and our family and friends turned out to help.

Meanwhile, we stayed up late into the evenings working on the next phase: the plans for our estate winery. After not getting what we were looking for from a couple of different architects, we decided to work directly with a structural engineer and design the building ourselves. Rich refreshed his Auto-Cad skills, and we both learned to jump through endless hoops as we navigated the permitting processes at the various county departments, seeking advice wherever we could. We settled on ICF (insulated concrete form) construction for our main winery building, which had the best thermal properties for protecting and ageing our wine. But it would take some time to complete the approval process and move forward.

Wanting to build a local presence in the meantime, we seized the opportunity in 2004 to take over Firefall Vineyards' lease of a small commercial building near the Somerset corner. Some of you might remember the "pumpkin-orange building" which has since received a more subdued paint job. Being the new kids on the block, we tried all sorts of things to drum up business—including Friday Night Wine-Downs featuring local live music and gourmet wine-pairing menus. Rich's sister, Annabel, had recently started a wine and food consulting business called Epiphany Gourmet, and she helped us develop our menu as well as supplying us with bottled spice blends and marinades under her label for resale. Shortly after, we hired Chef Tracy Laughlin, formerly of Trio Gourmet Deli, to cook for us on weekends and throughout the summer Wine-Down season.

Meanwhile, our application to join the Fair Play Winery Association was accepted, and we began participating in the Fair Play Festival and other events. It was an exciting time for the association, as Fair Play had only recently been granted AVA status as the first appellation in the Sierra Foothills beyond the default county designations, thanks to the tireless efforts of Brian Fitzpatrick and others. Over the next few years, Christine became very active in the association, both serving as its Vice President and spearheading the Amazing Race of Fair Play event series.

Finally, 2004 was the year we launched our Merry Monks Wine Club! It started small but mighty, with some of our original members still with us today. There may be a few people reading this who remember receiving shipment notifications by mail (Christine certainly remembers the hours of stuffing envelopes), and the tabloid-size newsletters we used to publish. Our wine club would eventually grow to become the most significant and rewarding part of our business, being a source of valued friendships, referrals, and endless enjoyment.

Included in your shipment:

2023 Sauvignon Blanc, El Dorado (new release)

Harvest Brix: 24.6	pH: 3.53	TA: 6.10	Alc: 14.4%	RS: 0%	ML: 0%
Cases: 199	Aging: 1 year in stainless steel				

After a six-year hiatus, our Sauvignon Blanc is back! Made from stunning, organically farmed grapes from Shadow Ranch Vineyard, this wine is fresh, delicate and herbaceous, with zesty lemon notes. It goes down easily as a patio sipping wine and is also outstanding with seafood. This is the second Sauvignon Blanc we have made (the first being in 2017), and the first to be offered in a club shipment. We are excited to share it with you!

2019 GSM, Sierra Foothills (Note: Upper tier clubs also receive 2016 Library GSM)

Harvest Brix: 25.4	pH: 3.90	TA: 4.74	Alc: 14.9%	RS: 0%	ML: 0%
Cases: 250	Aging: 2 years in mostly neutral European oak				

This new vintage of our Rhone-style blend is off to a beautiful, well-balanced start. Lush strawberry and floral notes awaken and fill the palate, leaving darker berries and supple tannins in their wake. Two of the three constituents of the blend—Grenache and Mourvedre—were expertly farmed by Karmere Vineyard in Amador County, while the Syrah came from Herbert Vineyard. Additionally, our Professional Winos and Ambassadors also receive, as part of their allotment, our *very first* vintage of this blend (2016) which has grown rich, smooth and decadent with time. Cellar Groupies: please inquire about library availability if interested.

2015 Petite Sirah, Estate Vineyard (exclusive Library offering)

Harvest Brix: 25.0	pH: 3.47	TA: 5.90	Alc: 14.5%	RS: 0%	ML: 0%
Cases: 224	Aging: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak				

Our Estate Petite Sirah is one of our most consistent wines from year to year. With its big, hearty tannins, intense blackberry notes and excellent acidity, it is an ideal candidate for aging. We intentionally set aside a pallet of most vintages for an eventual re-release to our club so that you could share in the benefits of longer cellaring. Ageing this wine smooths out the tannins, which develop a nice, velvety mouth feel. The dark fruit characteristics retain their prominence but deepen in complexity. We believe you will be pleased with the results of cellaring our 2015 vintage!