



March , 2017



This month, I have selected a couple of wines made by multi-generational farming families who have found additional success producing wines. In the case of both families, what began as an experiment yielded fantastic results and so their wine business has grown dramatically in the current generation.

The first is an old favorite, the **2014 Lone Birch Cabernet Sauvignon (\$17)**, produced by the Airfield Winery in Yakima Valley, Washington.

The Miller family has been farming this land for four generations, originally growing sugar beets, spearmint, peppermint, and asparagus before adding grapes in 1968. Like nearly every early Washington winery, their grapes were grown for Chateau St. Michelle, with whom they still have an active relationship selling fruit today.

They take the name of the winery from the former military air base that was active on the property during WWII. Founder H. Lloyd Miller was the beneficiary of a government auction where they sold the facility but he was the only bidder. In fairness to him, it had been his land before the war and was appropriated by the government for a pilot training facility. Years later, the locals speculate that this airbase was actually part of a network of "training" facilities that were actually protection for the nearby Hanford Nuclear Reservation. This is the facility where plutonium was refined for use in the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Once Lloyd purchased the land and building back from the government, he used the facilities and the newly available water from the Roza Irrigation district to begin the extensive commercial farming operation. It was Lloyd's son Don who first became interested in farming wine grapes, at the suggestion of Dr. Walter Clore. Clore was a Washington State University professor of horticulture who began to promote the idea of growing wine grapes in the state in the late 1960s. Although not well known now, he is widely recognized as the father of Washington viticulture and many wineries produce a bottling in his honor. With his help, Don Miller worked with Freemark Abbey winery in Napa to procure virus-free budwood and planted his first three acres in 1968, an experimental vineyard. The game changed radically in 1977 when US Tobacco purchased Chateau St. Michelle, and suddenly the demand for Washington State grapes skyrocketed. Under the guidance of Don's son Mike, the family began expanding the holdings to the 900 acres of vines they have today. In the 1990s, despite being one of Washington's largest growers, their Airport Ranch vineyards were not well known as most of their grapes went to one customer. Mike's son Marc came up with the idea of building their own winery, and thus Airfield Estates was born. Today, Marc is the winemaker and oversees all of the production.

While this is not a very expensive wine, winemaker Marcus Miller still gives it the high-end treatment. One of the great things about dealing with multi-generational wineries in Washington is they usually own their land outright, so they are not saddled with debt. This allows them to put a lot of value in their wines that most California properties cannot. For this wine, the grapes are hand-picked and sorted before going into the fermentors. They use a combination of punch downs, pump-overs, and rack-and-return to extract color and texture before racking into barrels right before the wine is dry. This allows the fermentations to finish in wood, which studies show produces a smoother product. After a year in oak, the wine is bottled. It is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, and they produced 1759 cases.

When you open this wine, please decant it for half an hour. Wines bottled under screw caps tend to be tighter and benefit from the oxygen. Once you do, it reveals a ripe nose of fresh cherries, cedar, pencil lead, and red currant jam. On the palate, it is surprisingly very dense for the price, with smooth, soft tannins and a long sense of fruit. Drink this wine over the next five years with grilled anything, braised meats, and pasta dishes.

My second pick also comes from a family who began farming field crops but later added grapes to their portfolio, this time in California. The **2013 Bishop's Peak Elevation (\$30)** is produced by the Talley family, who has been farming in San Luis Obispo, California since 1948. At that time, Oliver Talley started growing specialty vegetables in Arroyo Grande valley. Over time they have become one of the largest producers in the country of cilantro, bell peppers, Napa cabbage, and Brussel sprouts. They are so well known for the high quality of their produce that they will soon release a cookbook, **Our California Table, Celebrating the Seasons with the Talley Family**, published by Winter Park's own Story Farm.

In the 1970s Oliver's son, Don, watched with great interest as several vineyards began to develop around them, specifically in the nearby Edna Valley, and similar Santa Barbara county climates. He planted a small test plot in 1982 on the west hillside of what is today the Rincon Vineyard, that included chardonnay, pinot noir, riesling, sauvignon blanc, and cabernet sauvignon. When they produced their first 450 cases of wine in 1986, Don was encouraged enough to continue expanding their vineyard holdings. With completion of the new winery in 1991, they expanded their estate

vineyards to current day 190 acres, focusing almost exclusively on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. At that time, the winery was handed over to Don's son, Brian, who along with his wife Johnine, run it today.

In the late 1990s, Brian saw the the potential to expand their holdings in the warmer Paso Robles region, an hour to the north of their estate vineyards. They began producing Bishop's Peak wines, which allowed them to include in the wines made from heat loving varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah. Their elevation celebrates that Bishop Peak, at 1559 feet, is tallest of the Nine Sisters, a volcanic range that extends from Morro Bay to San Luis Obispo. It was named by the Mission padres, who thought that the three spires on top resembled a bishop's miter cap.

For this wine they use grapes grown on the Santa Margarita Ranch, a blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Cabernet Franc, 17% Petit Verdot, and 16% Malbec. After hand-harvesting, they are fermented using native yeasts in stainless steel tanks. Once dry, they are moved to a combination of French and American oak barrels, where they are aged for eighteen months, of which 39% are new barrels.

When you get ready to serve this wine, please decant it for half an hour to allow the tannins to resolve and the bouquet to develop. Once you do, it offers an inviting combination of black currant and cherry liqueur, black licorice and Maduro cigar wrappers, and a wisp of hickory smoke. On the palate, this wine shows very nice density, with a rich core of fruit wrapped by moderate, but obvious tannins, and a long smooth finish. Serve this wine with a grilled tri-tip steak, or ground lamb stuffed peppers.

Sarah's Napa Cabbage Salad

from **Our California Table, Celebrating the Seasons with the Talley Family**

When Brian Talley visited our store in October, we hosted a meet and greet for our customers, and his publisher, Bob Morris, prepared a few recipes from the upcoming cookbook. As I was contemplating a dish for the features this month I remembered this fabulous salad and his grilled Tri-Tip steak. So this month you get a two-fer, since the steak is pretty easy.

1/2 medium head napa cabbage, chopped, about 8 cups

4 green onions, chopped, about 1/2 cup

1 3oz package of chicken flavored Ramen, noodles uncooked and crumbled. Reserve seasoning packet.

2 tbsp toasted sesame seeds

1/4 cup cilantro, chopped

2 tbsp sugar

1/2 cup vegetable oil

3 tbsp rice vinegar

1/2 tsp salt

1/2 tsp pepper

1/2 cup slivered or sliced almonds, toasted

Combine cabbage, onions, ramen noodles, sesame seeds, and cilantro in a large bowl. Sprinkle with 1/2 of the packet of ramen seasoning.

In a separate bowl, combine sugar, oil, vinegar, salt, pepper and the remaining 1/2 ramen seasoning. Mix until sugar dissolves.

One hour before serving, dress the salad with about 3/4 of the dressing. At the time of serving, adjust dressing to taste, season with salt and pepper. Top with toasted, slivered almonds.

Tri-Tip Steak

from **Our California Table, Celebrating the Seasons with the Talley Family**

This intensely meaty cut of top sirloin used to be hard to find on the east coast, but is more common now. There is only one of these triangular cuts per steer, which adds to it's rarity. I buy mine at either Whole Foods or Trader Joe's, if you have one in your area.

When you buy this cut, you will notice that it has a thick grain, similar to brisket. It is a good cut for grilling but also works nicely in low and slow applications, such as a pot roast. I list the cooking instructions here just because they are so detailed, but with elements you won't find here in Florida. If you do not have a Santa Maria grill and an adequate supply of well-seasoned coast oak, then I still encourage you to grill it, but using a hot side/cool side approach to your grill fire. Sear on the hot side for five minutes per side, then shift it to the cool side of the grill until it reaches the internal temperature you prefer. I think when served very rare it is a bit chewy, and is better served at a warmer internal temperature, such as medium rare/medium. Slice thin and serve alone or on crusty buns with grilled peppers and onions.

1 3-4 pound tri-tip or top sirloin roast

Salt

Pepper

Garlic powder

In a Santa Maria style-barbecue pit, start a large fire, ideally with well seasoned coast live oak wood, about an our before you plan to cook.

Season the steak with copious amounts of salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Don't worry about over seasoning, because the meat will cook long enough that much will be cooked off. Follow my directions above and enjoy!