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This month, both features are wines that enjoyed great popularity with our customers a few years ago, then due to a lack of supply, faded away. They are also both made with the intention of being very approachable at a young age; both wineries do a great job of accomplishing this but from different approaches. This month we will look at why wineries create second labels and the vital role they play to consumers and producers alike.

While we take this category for granted, the winery “second label” is really a modern development. The concept of a second label was created by the famed French oenologist Émile Peynaud, who more than any other wine scientist, changed the face of modern wines starting in the 1950's. It was Peynaud who, as a scientist at the University of Bordeaux, encouraged the famous chateau of Bordeaux to clean their cellars of mold, rotate new barrels into their aging regime, and harvest grapes based on actual ripeness, not the date on the calendar. We take all of these points for granted now, but after World War II, most chateaux in Bordeaux were broke, even the famous First Growths, and cost cutting was seen as their path to survival.

By the 1970's Peynaud started to realize that not every part of the vineyard produced the same quality, so at the estates where he consulted, he began a system of block harvesting. By separating the various parcels of grapes by their initial quality before they were fermented, he was able to triage the highest quality lots into the newest barrels and give them the most attention. The problem was that wineries would then blend all of the wines back together for their final bottling. He suggested culling out the barrels which, for whatever was the reason,

held wine from the lowest quality vines, and either selling it off in bulk to the negotiants or bottling it under a separate label. These became known as the “second labels” and provided wineries with some cash flow without lowering the quality of the primary label. Over time the idea caught on, and now many wineries all over the world use the second label as a way of concentrating quality of their primary wines.

For our first wine, the **2012 Fore Front Cabernet Sauvignon (\$20)**, this is the second label of the Pine Ridge Winery in Napa Valley. Ever since their founding by Gary Andrus in 1978, the wines from Pine Ridge have been known for the legendary age worthiness. Their idea for a second label is to produce a wine that is softer and more ready to drink than their flagship wines grown in their estate vineyards across Napa Valley. To that end, you may notice that the front label identifies three different counties where the grapes are grown to make this wine. Winemaker Michael Beaulac sources the grapes to make Fore Front, capitalizing on the unique character they display when grown in different climates and soils.

Although this wine is labeled as Cabernet Sauvignon it only makes up 82% of the blend and portions come from all three appellations. In 2012 the vintage was nearly perfect across all of California, and so growing conditions for each region allow Beaulac to blend within the variety to build complexity and texture. For this wine the Napa component contributes power and color; the Sonoma grapes lend structure and tannin while the Lake county grapes give the final blend lift and additional power. To build further texture and body, 11% of this wine is Syrah harvested from Lake county vineyards, 6% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Merlot are from Napa.

In the modern era, say 1990 and later, the second labels have been lifted out of the shadows and are now a very important part of some wineries production. In the early days the winemaking of the seconds was often attended to by the assistants and interns. As prices have climbed in the past two decades these wines have demanded more attention, and now many are made in larger quantities than the flagship bottlings. As if to emphasize their commitment to this wine, it is aged in 50% new French oak barrels for 19 months. At over \$1000 per barrel, which only holds the equivalent of 300 bottles, it is an expensive treatment that is not used for any wine not destined to make a statement.

You will see exactly what I mean as soon as you open this wine. Do yourself a favor and decant it for a half-hour, then get ready. The nose offers you an almost brooding sense of dark cherries, sage, dark chocolate, black currant jam, dried orange peel and molasses. On the palate it is pretty darn dense, with the rich fruit and moderate tannins intertwined into a long finish. Although good now, this wine will drink nicely for five to seven years.

My next selection is also a second label, of sorts, but made through a completely different set of circumstances. The **2013 J. Bookwalter Subplot #30 (\$22)** is produced from the various barrels and tanks left over after all of the more expensive wines from this winery are finished. While this may sound a little too much like a Friday night, left-over buffet, there is not much in this winery that is not superb and when crafted by John Bookwalter the results are spectacular. In following my other theme, long lost friends, it has been a few years since there was enough wine from Bookwalter to supply our clubs. There was a time, almost a decade ago, when this was our top selling Washington winery, but a series of low yielding vintages coupled with their meteoric rise in sales left little wine in the pipeline. Now those days are temporarily behind us and I am excited to bring John's wines back to the stores.

As Washington State wineries go, the Bookwalter's are considered pioneers in the state. Jerry Bookwalter moved to Washington State in mid 1970's to become the viticultural manager of Sagemoor Vineyards, a 500-acre property that includes the now famous Bacchus, Dionysus and Weinbau sites. Born in California and with a degree from UC Davis, he had been managing vineyards in the Golden State, but fell in love with the climate and potential of eastern Washington. Then in 1993, the winemaking bug finally bit him and he launched J. Bookwalter wines. The first efforts, made in his garage, were mostly white wines, but when his son John joined him, they moved into a commercial building. Over time, they realized that customers had a hard time finding them in an industrial complex, so they moved into an actual winery and have since added a restaurant.

I am always amazed when I taste the Bookwalter wines that winemaker John, Jerry's son, has no formal training. In the mid-1990's John "accidentally" ran into Zelma Long, the legendary winemaker of Simi, at a conference in the Tri-Cities area. She agreed to consult on the Bookwalter wines, and John absorbed her wisdom like a sponge. In the last couple of vintages, he has hired Caleb Foster to handle the day-to-day winemaking so he can focus on sales, but he still keeps an active hand in what is going on in the winery.

All of the wines produced by Bookwalter have a literary term for their name. Some of you who are also Reserve Club members may remember the Conflict, which was one of our October, 2015 features. The Subplot series started in 1983 when they began producing a non-vintage red wine. As you can guess this is the 30th version of that wine and now most bottlings are vintage dated. 2013 was a fantastic vintage for Washington State and this wine shows the richness and power of a quality vintage. Most of the wine that goes into the Subplot are from their younger vines, combined with the press wine from their best parcels. For this wine the blend is 28% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 23% Syrah, 17% Tempranillo, and 7% Malbec, produced from grapes grown 9 different vineyards in the Colombia Valley. 20% of this wine was aged in new French barrels and the remaining portion in progressively older barrels up to five years old. The wine spent 18 months in oak before bottling.

Like the wine above I strongly recommend decanting this one for a half hour before serving. Once you do, it gives you a brooding nose of dark chocolate, coffee beans, cooked black raspberry and dried cherries along with an undertone of graphite. On the palate it is quite soft initially, with a good sense of minerality that pops mid palate and provides a little lift on the palate. The finish is very long and nicely balanced, showing that this wine should age nicely for three to five years.

## Slow Cooker Pot Roast

It is hard not to like pot roast with big reds, and there is something to be said for how well this dish works in a slow cooker. One of the keys to successful slow cooker dishes is to brown the meat before you begin cooking to take advantage of the flavor boost of the Maillard reaction. I also like to tie large roasts to ensure even cooking. This dish works really well with both, or any, red wine.

- 1 boneless beef chuck-eye roast (5 to 6 pounds), tied**
- Salt and ground black pepper**
- 4 teaspoons vegetable oil**
- 4 medium onions, chopped medium**
- 1 large celery rib, chopped medium**
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks**
- 6 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through a garlic press**
- 1 cup dry red wine**
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes**
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth**
- 1 ¾ cups low-sodium beef broth**
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- 3 bay leaves**
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves**

1. Dry the roast thoroughly with paper towels, then season generously with salt and pepper. Heat 2 teaspoons of the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Brown the roast thoroughly on all sides, reducing the heat if the fat begins to smoke heavily, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer it to a slow cooker.

2. Return the skillet to medium heat and heat the remaining 2 teaspoons oil until shimmering. Add the onions, celery, and carrots; cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are lightly browned, 4 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the wine, scraping the browned bits off the skillet bottom, and cook until almost dry, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes, broths, red pepper flakes, bay leaves, and thyme; bring to a boil. Pour into the slow cooker.

3. Cover and cook, on either low or high, until the meat is tender, 9 to 10 hours on low, or 6 to 7 hours on high. Transfer the beef to a carving board and tent loosely with foil to keep warm. Allow the cooking liquid to settle for about 5 minutes, then use a wide spoon to skim the fat off the surface. Discard the bay leaves. Puree the liquid and vegetables, in batches, in a blender or a food processor fitted with the steel blade until smooth. (Alternatively, use an immersion blender and puree in the slow-cooker insert until smooth.) Stir in the parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper. Slice the roast into 1/2-

inch-thick slices, arrange on a warmed serving platter, and pour 1/2 cup of the sauce over the meat. Serve, passing the remaining sauce separately.