At a recent wine seminar, a writer/critic proclaimed that “wine must be more than delicious.” The call to arms filled my chest and I felt the power of his gestalt. Then I paused. Sure, a wine can be intellectually intriguing and the experience more profound based on outside information like where it was made or how it was made. But, in the end, if the wine is not delicious, then it will be merely a tasting data point and the experience will not enter the various parts of my brain associated with memory as pleasurable. It will be a saturated intellectual curiosity I do not need to repeat. I certainly will not buy a case for my cellar or add it to my wine lists for customers to drink with my restaurant’s food. You would think that would be true for most people, right? Nope. In many centers of wine hipness these days, what matters is not how a wine tastes and how the associated sensory memories make you feel, but instead the social source of pleasure derived from tasting – and professing to like - a much ballyhooed wine that is made in a style that is currently in vogue. What matters is how tasting and telling others what you taste makes you feel, not how it brings pleasure to you when consumed.

I took my family to Copenhagen this summer. We went to a handful of the “important” neo-Nordic cuisine restaurants, mostly off-shoots from the much-lauded NOMA, the world’s #1 restaurant according to many restaurant guides. It appears Copenhagen wine directors, as in Paris, are caught in a collective Natural wine craze. I like the idea behind Natural wine and at one time was interested in tasting them to see what the buzz was all about. In Copenhagen I had no other option as there was nary a non-Natural wine to be found on any of the wine lists. No “classic” wines from Bordeaux, Burgundy, Piedmont, or the Sonoma Coast. In a city with the “greatest cuisine on the planet,” all I could drink was wine esoterica. When I uncovered a handful of classic bottles at a bottle shop, they stuck out for their incongruity against a backdrop of Trousseau, Jura whites, Bio-dynamic wines, and other wine styles/regions currently in vogue. This would not be catastrophic if almost every one of the wines I drank in Copenhagen were not flawed and, mostly, downright unpalatable. The memories they conjured up included turning my dad’s odorous compost pile as a teenager, wincing as I sipped an apple cider vinegar for use in a mignonette with oysters, and spitting out a spritzy sparkling Shiraz as a neophyte wine buyer. Not quite the walk down the sensory Hall of Fame. No matter how much money I spent or the extent to which I quizzed the sommelier, almost every bottle I ordered had some very unpleasant flavor that did not light up my brain’s Pleasure Center or pair with the food. At all. I forlornly left full bottles on the table or grimaced though a few glasses to get one of the other desired effects from the bottle to dull my disappointment. Why did the sommeliers buy only Natural wines for their lists? Did they know about the great, classic wines and wine regions of the world? Were they deemed inappropriate to pair with neo-Nordic cuisine? Or, was something else going on?

Instead of highlighting the classic wines of the world, many tastemakers - including sommeliers, writers, and wine organizations - are focusing on what is novel in wine; whether it is a region or a winemaking style. In some instances, this makes sense. Wine writers need something new to write about. That is the currency of their trade. The known wine varieties and wine regions have been written about a million times. Further, prices for known wines from known regions often have been pushed out of reach of most consumers. So, sommeliers focus on wines of process (oxidative winemaking, stem use, egg fermenters) where flavors are created and fruit to make these wines is cheap — and somewhat beside the point — versus wines of place (terroir-driven wines) which by definition are unique and often the wines are expensive. As one wine fad flames out (remember the Beanie Baby doll of wine, orange wines?), it is replaced immediately with another. In the U.S. in the past 5 years, wine fads have sparked and fizzled in a line from Bio-dynamic wines to Natural wines to wines made in egg fermenters to Corsican wines to Sherry to Jura wines to wines of “Balance” to “Pet Nat” wines, and on and on. Each of them is worth trying and are appropriate for certain situations (Sherry with cheese, chicken and
The 2013 wines have turned out to be the best wines we have made to date. Partly this is due to the maturation of the vines as they are now 15 years old and entered what winemakers consider their best years. The aromas appear to have lost some youthful exuberance evident in young vine wines and the wines have become more refined and expressive. Writing the tasting notes, I kept saying, “this is the best we have made in 10 years...or ever.” It became embarrassing and redundant so I will not say it repeatedly in the detailed notes except once, here: these wines are, as a class, what we hope to achieve from our vineyard. Please tell us what you think whenever you open a bottle.

The 2013 growing season was even and a little early. We had a dry (ish) fall and the grapes reached full maturity at low sugar. Yields were average for us (which means low but not heartbreakingly so). As a result, there should be enough of each wine, except Roussanne (apologies), to meet initial demand, yet most will sell out after a few weeks from release.

2013 Peay Vineyards Estate Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast

Every winter after vintage I pester Vanessa with questions about the various wines; which ones are knock outs, which wines may be an issue. She usually puts me off and says “wait for the blend trials that start in early spring and see for yourself.” With the 2013 Chardonnays, however, Vanessa did not equivocate; she smiled and said “this is an amazing year for Chardonnay.” From her lips to your ears.

The nose has the classic floral and mineral profile our Estate Chardonnay expresses with hints of lemon curd and slate. The texture is silky and round but taut due to vibrant acidity. Lemon merengue and vanilla cream linger on the finish though with freshness not heaviness. The 2013 Estate Chardonnay is drinking very well even in its youth though you can age this for 5-10 years and be confident it will hold up and evolve.

2013 Peay Vineyards Ama Estate Pinot noir, Sonoma Coast

2013 Peay Vineyards Scallop Shelf Estate Pinot noir, Sonoma Coast

Did I say at the top of the page I wasn’t going to gush about any individual wine as they were all very good? Well, I can’t resist. The 2013 Scallop Shelf captures everything we hope for from this cuvée. It is refined, elegant and subtle while having breadth, power and intensity. I find this combination hard to find in Pinot noir and am excited when I do.

The nose is lifted with rose, Fuji apple, black tea and orange rind aromas whirling in the glass. The texture is medium bodied and lithe. Brown spices and plum flavors accent the aromas above with an incredibly long finish despite the lack of fat or heaviness (13.1% alc.). I usually recommend you age our Pinot noirs for many years before popping a bottle. In this case, I suggest you drink one now as it is delicious and pretty approachable despite its youth. That has been true for all the 2013 wines. You can age this wine for 10+ years as it has great acidity and soft but present tannins that will keep the wine fresh as secondary aromas develop.

Our Syrah are unique compared to Syrah from both the Old World and the New World. It is colder during the growing season at our vineyard than in the northern Rhône or anywhere in California growing Syrah, so you will find the savory flavors and brightness common to cold climate wines. Due to the moderating effect of our maritime climate, however, we also experience longer hang time than most areas. This results in wines with a full development of floral and fruit flavors without leading to overripe characteristics of jamminess or baked fruit flavors. The past three vintages
A CASE FOR A CASE OF CHARDONNAY
—— WINEGROWER NICK PEAY

As the Wine Institute reported in 2011, “Chardonnay far and away remains the most popular wine in the U.S. and has continued to be the leading varietal wine for the last decade.” It occupies that middle ground of the wine palate, less weighty than the white wines of the Rhône, such as Grenache Blanc or Marsanne, but more substantive than say, the Albariño of Galicia. Winegrowers the world over have crafted versions from the viscous and oak-laden to the exceedingly tart and one-dimensional. And it is not static once in the bottle. By now, we’ve reminded you aplenty how wine constantly evolves and transforms over time.

And so, today, when you encounter a Chardonnay here is what you might find: The young Chardonnay, and by that I mean just finished, just bottled or about to be bottled, can be exuberant and rich with heady aromas of apples, pears and vanilla. Not exactly a wine to contemplate, but one that seems to speak of beauty yet to come when all the parts settle down and come together. But not all outgoing young Chardonnay turns into subtle, elegant, endlessly compelling wine that makes you just want to stick your nose in the glass and visit awhile. When we buy what we think is an age worthy wine and lay it down, we are sometimes surprised to find upon pulling that cork 6, 8 or 10 years hence that it has become disjointed and clunky. The rich fruit has become syrupy, the acid awkward and poking out on the back half. Some of those more overtly fruity notes may have turned into cooked winter squash and pumpkin. Not compelling. You kind of just want to put the glass down and not pick it up. But maybe that wine will evolve in the glass as older wine transforms even more dramatically in the glass. So you pick it up again, hoping against hope that magic will happen in the glass: An old Chardonnay can start out smelling oxidized and tired, only to freshen itself up with ten minutes or more in the glass to reveal an array of subtle flavors. That tiredness seems to have disappeared. Then again, it may just get collapse in a heap.

And then there are the Chardonnays that are so tight and closed in their youth that you despair if anything interesting will evolve. At times, something amazing happens and a 5-10 year transformation reveals beautiful aromatics (think lemon tart, lime oil, even tangerine zest, plus something floral). There is a delicacy with a surprising fullness in the mouth, yet cleansing acidity, and a finish that carries on long after swallowing the beverage. With time, distinctly age-related nuttiness may emerge, a touch of marzipan, and maybe a hint of clover honey will dance around the other flavors. Or sometimes you end up with a simple, crisp wine, a little faded, not worth thinking too much about. At least you won’t recoil from taking another sip. At worst, a winemaker’s idea of a long aging style of Chardonnay results in so much acidity that it is, in fact, difficult to choke down. You won’t want to pick up that glass to take another sip, either. So that is a quick summary of a range of Chardonnay flavor profiles, but there must be more to it: what compels us to toil in a field so crowded, to work with a variety that so many have sought to interpret?

Chardonnay’s very ubiquity guarantees little respect. Yet I find I gravitate to Chardonnay when selecting wines from the cellar, consuming them without guilt, but with pleasure. Last night’s garlic and butter shrimp on linguine was well accompanied by a six-year-old Puligny Montrachet. Sunday’s crudo appetizer was finely complemented by a competitor’s recent vintage West Sonoma Coast Chardonnay, my tastebuds delighting while my rational mind ignored the banality of the variety. And, I do drink our own Chardonnay, though not often under the same circumstances. Often, I drink a young Chardonnay at the vineyard when customers have ventured to our remote corner to pay us a visit. A few times a year, I get to attend a Peay wine dinner where an older Peay Chardonnay will be paired with a course which I find ideal. I just cannot deny that I get so much pleasure from certain versions of that particular variety. Secrets revealed!

Our daily nutritional needs require three meals a day, three occasions to stimulate the nerve network that results in taste pleasure sensations. While I know a utilitarian diner or two who insists on ignoring these thrice daily sensations (asceticism appeals to these penitents, perhaps), it is a greater challenge to get in tune with one’s Dionysian self, to shut out the torrent of information telling you what you ought to eat and drink. Don’t get me wrong, I’m all for trying the new – Greek bottarga, burdock root broth, stinging nettle sorbet – but there is a time – quite a few, I find - for the familiar deliciousness of a perfectly broiled filet of black cod with a dollop of tarragon and crème fraiche, quinoa cooked in chicken broth with caramelized onions, and a slice of strawberry rhubarb galette. I find Chardonnay can be both pleasing

Continued on page 4
have been difficult for us out on the coast due to the very cold and wet weather in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Due to disease and mildew pressure, we hardly made any wine at all going from 725 cases of Syrah per year to 125 cases. The Syrahs emphasized tart berries, iron and meat flavors, and white pepper aromas. With the 2013 vintage, however, we are back to our fighting weight and the additional vine age and the superb vintage have resulted in a stellar La Bruma Syrah.

The 2013 La Bruma offers violets, lead and blackberry aromas with hints of white pepper and braising liquid serving as the core of the nose. The mouth is rich but not heavy and impeccably balanced. The acid brings structure and tone to the wine and the persistence on the finish is quite long. There is no angularity to this wine despite how young it is. Again, I usually recommend you hold the Syrah for 5-15 years—and still do—but the 2013 La Bruma will be approachable earlier than that due to a vintage that really made bright, aromatic, and balanced wines.

2013 Peay Vineyards Estate Roussanne/Marsanne, Sonoma Coast 60 Cases

Roussanne and Marsanne are impossible to grow on our vineyard due to their need for more sun than we typically ever have. We pick Marsanne as it is rotting on the vine (not to worry we cut the rot out of the vineyard during the fall and also sort after picking) and we harvest the Roussanne at absurdly low sugar levels in November. By that time the vines have shut down so we need it off the vine or we experience nutrient issues that complicate winemaking. As a result, we have made this wine in only 6 of the last 10 vintages. We would rip out the 0.6 acres except every once in a while a vintage like 2013 comes along and we are able to make a complex, nuanced, arresting wine that shows what we can do when the stars align. So, we persist in supporting our beloved charity case.

The nose is focused and not fat or rich smelling. It includes aromas of honeysuckle and almond skin (green and nutty) with hints of kaffir lime. The texture on the mouth is silky and round but not cloying or heavy. Notes of kumquat, lime-stone and lemon persist on a very long and intense finish. Again, this wine is very appealing right out of the gate though it will be an entirely different wine with 7-10 years of age as the direct, citrus and floral flavors mellow and oxidative flavors add weight and nuance.

### Upcoming Dinners & Events

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### A Case for a Case of Chardonnay...Continued from Page 3

and familiar, and also intriguing. It can compel one to savor; to be forced to pay attention to the pleasurable taste sensations so you register a taste memory and attempt to hang on to that peak experience. If this is that old every day wine called Chardonnay, why am I having such a mind-blowing organoleptic experience?

Peay Chardonnay drinkers, often newly exposed to our wine, often exclaim that they “don’t like Chardonnay, but they love” ours. Ever so malleable, Chardonnay comes in many versions. There is no shame in being a fan of a really tasty version, even if there are vast oceans of versions that are ordinary or worse. Vive le Chardonnay!
YES, BUT BE DELICIOUS...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

fish!) My Facebook, Delectable and Vivino accounts, however, are blowing up with high scores and high fives for almost exclusively these bottles. Why not the exemplary classic wines of the world that speak of terroir and not technique?

Wine has been a status symbol among the upper classes in the U.S. since the American Revolution. The upper classes were mostly of British stock and the Brits did not have an indigenous wine growing and wine making culture (not true anymore, I drank a sparkling from the U.K. last weekend.) In America, wine was imported, expensive, and inaccessible to many. As waves of immigrants from southern Europe came to this country in the late 1800s and early 1900s, they brought their cultural traditions including the presence of wine on the table. Among immigrants, homemade wine was consumed without much fuss but outside the upper class the majority of Americans stuck to beer and spirits. And then came the great wealth generation of the 1980s and 1990s. Money accumulated outside the historic social classes at a great pace. Conspicuous consumption was a widespread phenomenon and, in some circles, drinking rare wine the U.S. “aristocracy” consumed (Bordeaux, mostly) became a sign that a person had reached a certain level of social sophistication. Unlike a piece of jewelry where the size of a diamond is visible to the eye, with wine the sensory value of a wine lies hidden inside the bottle. A consumer does not know if he will like the taste of a wine until after it has been purchased and consumed. Certain features may indicate how a wine may taste if the consumer has some wine knowledge – like region, alcohol levels, vintage – but even then, wine is expensive and the majority of people need someone to tell us what will taste good and what we should put in our cellar. Into that vacuum walked the wine critic.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, we relied on a handful of powerful critics to tell us what we should drink. Their power and preferences in wine were paramount and unchallenged. The forces of supply and demand elevated their favored wines to status symbols and price became the visible symbol of quality. At the same time, Americans started to spend more of their new wealth on eating and drinking. Cuisine from all over the world came to our shores and fine dining restaurants multiplied like bunnies. As we dined out for business and pleasure, we relied on sommeliers (and our wrinkled, handy, wine score pocket guides) to lead us in our wine-buying decisions. The interest in wine and the dominance of a few critics dove-tailed with an explosion in communications technology. Web-enabled handheld devices brought wine knowledge to us – and could be shared by us – from wherever we sat. As a result, over the past ten years, power has de-centralized from just one or two critics to a multitude of bloggers and avid posters of tasting notes and Facebook posts. They have gained a platform and audience to share what they think is good to drink. I like this evolution. It feels democratic and self-confident, good American ideals. It can lead to open minds and cut down fossilized social structures of taste. But there is an inherent danger.

When I first started learning about wine in the early 90s, the wine authorities had the benefit of decades of tasting to back up their pronouncements. Of course, I did not always agree with their palates – which I did not recognize initially so I followed them – but their opinions were at least based on a breadth of wine knowledge that far surpassed my own. Further, to be in print you needed a sufficient number of subscribers to support you or have the approval of a publisher. Now, everyone has equal voice and access to the public, and perspective and wine knowledge are not a prerequisite for sharing an opinion. Since wine is a consumer good with somewhat invisible product features, we open ourselves up to crazes and fads if the hype is in overdrive. Something ultimately tasty to a small sub-sector of adventurous wine drinkers, will be buoyed and amplified online by multitudes with little knowledge on the subject sharing their enthusiasm for something new and hip. What is perhaps a passing curiosity becomes a phenomenon overnight. As a result, new tastemakers may focus on the buzz of the moment at the expense of offering a range of wines that pair with their cuisine. In the end, I prefer this to the tyranny of thought and opinion we experienced over the past 30 years. But, it is how I ended up drinking nasty wine for 4 days in Copenhagen.

At Peay we strive to make classic wines that transcend fashion and fads. We hope to make delicious wines that you buy because they taste good and represent a truth about how that variety tastes in a cold location, specifically, our vineyard, and not because they are trendy and hip. So, next time when I am in the land of wine hipness, I will pocket my Beanie Baby mad cash and stick to beer and spirits. Have you tried a Saison?
As I mentioned in last year’s spring newsletter, Peay Vineyards participated in the Southern Foodways Alliance’s annual wine auction weekend at Blackberry Farm a year ago last January. As part of the festivities, we donated a line up of never before released 3 liter wines plus a two night stay at the vineyard Barn House with Alabama chef Frank Stitt from Highlands Bar & Grill in residence as your private chef. As far as I was concerned, Diane and Jim Stark were not the only winners, I got to spend a weekend with one of the country’s most accomplished, thoughtful, and modest culinary geniuses. The night before we drove to the vineyard, Frank and I went to dinner at San Francisco’s much-lauded—and rightly so—Statebird Provisions. Chef Stuart Brioza stopped by our table to say hello to Frank. We talked about the dishes in front of us and the amazing range of fresh ingredients available to California chefs. Frank is from the South and what he grows on his farm in Alabama is quite different from what we enjoy in California. The three of us began to map out our morning shopping spree at local markets but we were in need of superior protein. “Oh, I can help,” said Stuart. The next thing we knew, Stuart proffered a gorgeous, local halibut filet that was so fresh it was still in rigor mortis. Now, what to do with it?

The next evening, as Frank was preparing the halibut for the grill, we popped a bottle of Viognier and sat around the table in the Farm House kitchen chatting. As we bantered, Frank started to slice thin strips of halibut onto a plate. He began to talk flavor sensations: sweet, heat, salt, fat, umami and...boom! Out came a colorful plate of sensational crudo. This is not the first time you have seen crudo served with these ingredients but it was the first time I had seen it organically build in a chef’s brain as he reached out to grab what was fresh and put it together on the fly. It was sensational. I think we could have stopped right there and been happy with plates of halibut crudo but Frank was just getting started.

Over the July 4th weekend, I gave this recipe a shot on the Wednesday night kick-off of a long weekend party we throw for over a hundred friends. I could not find halibut that was sushi grade fresh but I did find local cod which was perfect. This is easy to prepare with the only qualification that it takes time to cut and assemble so be sure whatever dishes follow do not require lots of your attention with last minute searing or you may not have time to grab a few before they disappear.

**Ingredients**

- 1 lb Sushi grade white fish, halibut, cod, et al.
- 1 Nectarine or peach. Ripe and aromatic but not too soft or will not slice well. Can substitute with citrus, if desired
- 1 Avocado. Ripe but not too soft or will not slice well
- 1 Bunch basil, preferably small leaves
- 1 Lime
- 1 Fresh red chili pepper (or jalapeno). If desire less heat, use radish

Olive oil, not too green or strong—avoid Tuscan, if possible. Use a milder southern Italian or Californian olive oil

Rock salt & cracked black pepper (optional)

**To assemble**

The assembly is really a matter of trial and error and personal taste. Prepare the ingredients below and try a little of this and a little of that and see where you find the balance of flavors that you think are ideal. Also, feel free to replace the nectarine with cherry tomatoes or citrus, the basil with mint, avocado with burrata, etc. Make the recipe yours.

1. Slice the fish across the filet into 2 1/2 inch pieces. Arrange on a platter.
2. Slice nectarine and avocado into 1” by 0.25” or smaller slices. Pick the smallest fresh basil leaves off the bunch and set aside. Cut them into thin slices if they are too big. Slice the red chili pepper into very small strips and dice. Discard seeds if you wish to avoid too much heat. Quarter the lime.
3. Drizzle a little olive oil over the fish, add avocado, nectarine, basil, red chili pepper, a squeeze of lime juice and a dash of rock salt and cracked black pepper (optional). Serve with either Peay Viognier or Chardonnay.

- Andy Peay
GROUP 5 ALLOCATION

TO ORDER: You can order online at our Wine Shop located at www.peayvineyards.com. Please use the account information you received when joining the mailing list. Your account information was also sent to you via email when the release was announced. If you cannot find your user name and password, your user name is the email address you gave when you signed up. Please click on the lost password button at the Purchase section of the site to be assigned a new password that you can change once in your account. You can also fax orders to 707-894-8723 using the form below. Please do not send an order by email. If you would like more than your allocation, please put your request in the wish list online or email Jenn at jenn@peayvineyards.com or Andy at andy@peayvineyards.com and we will adjust your order, if we are able.

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BILLING ADDRESS
NAME ____________________________ STREET ____________________________
CITY ____________________________ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE ______
EMAIL ____________________________

SHIPPING:
There are 2 methods of shipping: UPS Ground, UPS 2 day air. We use a superb third party shipping fulfillment company — Wineshipping. They are the largest, highest quality, most affordable shipper focused exclusively on direct wine shipping. If ordering online, rates will auto-fill during the process. If ordering by fax, please indicate what method you would like below and we will calculate shipping.

All Ground orders east of the Rockies ship via Wineshipping’s refrigerated trucks to 5 temperature controlled warehouses located in New York, Dallas, Florida, Chicago and Atlanta. UPS Ground picks up from these warehouses and delivers to your door within 1-2 days. The rates for this service are less than UPS Ground from California and much more sound for the wine. The only catch is we must determine at least one week in advance if we will ship your order across country to you in Wineshipping’s trucks. For this reason, we attempt to be as conservative as we can be about shipping temperatures and will not ship unless forecasted temperatures are between 35 and 73 degrees. It also means we run a risk of weather changing during the intervening 8 days from forecast but there is no more conservative, protective way to ship than via refrigerated trucks. No one else we know of does this as it is expensive and requires scale which this shipper has.

Shipping Dates: We have four dates for you to select from - Oct. 20th, Nov. 3rd, Nov. 13th and Dec. 4th. We recommend Northern CA selects Oct 20th, Southern CA Nov. 3rd, most of the county Nov. 13th and warm states like Florida, Texas and Arizona select Dec. 4th. We will ship on these dates unless the weather is too warm. In that instance, we will monitor the weather and ship afterwards. We are not hosting a Fall Open House this year. If you wish to pick up your order, please schedule a mid-week pick up by emailing Orion at orion@peayvineyards.com or we will hold it until the Spring Open House.

SHIPPING ADDRESS (IF DIFFERENT THAN BILLING) NO P.O. BOXES, PREFER BUSINESS:
NAME ____________________________ STREET ____________________________ CITY ______________
STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE ______
EMAIL ____________________________