The Fall release offers some of the best wines from truly special vintages, including the 2015 Estate Chardonnay, the Scallop Shelf and Ama Pinots, the Estate Roussanne, and the 2014 Les Titans Syrah. The past four vintages—2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015—have made delicious and age-worthy wines, each capturing the personality of the vintage and a unique expression of our vineyard. The wines in this release, however, have attained another level with more evolved expressions of Chardonnay, Pinot noir and Syrah. Partially this was due to the benefit of vine age and the accretion of knowledge from one more year growing grapes and making wine. Partially, they were just easier vintages to make wine. What was 2015 like?

For us - right on the edge of the Pacific Ocean - 2015 was not an abnormally hot and short vintage. What, you say, that is not what the press has been saying? It is true, most wineries finished picking their grapes during the warm month of August, the earliest pick dates on record for many. This is true, however, for vineyards located a little further inland or above the cold coastal inversion layer where summer heat persisted unmitigated. But, for our vineyard tucked up against the Pacific Ocean, the dry and relatively warm January led to bud break two and a half weeks earlier than normal but summer was not abnormally hot due to the chilling effect of the marine layer so our growing season was not that short. We picked throughout September into October—which is early for us—but the season started 2 1/2 weeks early. The real weather news of the 2015 vintage for us was the timing of cold and wet weather in May and early June when the vines were in flower. This inhibited fruit set and our yields were down 20-30%. But, how about the wines? The wines are magnificent. There is depth of flavor coupled with poise and elegance. Yes, we made less wine and you will see some wines will sell quickly but so it goes with farming. We are just pleased the wines continue to deliciously capture our vineyard’s unique expression with increased refinement every year. We hope you enjoy them.

2015 Peay Vineyards Estate Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast

With 17 years of vine age and a moderate growing season our Estate Chardonnay has evolved into a mature, nuanced expression that Peay Chardonnay drinkers will thoroughly enjoy. The ultimate impression of the 2015 Estate Chardonnay is grace and harmony. The nose emphasizes candied lemon, lemon verbena, and iodine. The mouthfeel is medium and silky though lively and decidedly not fat. The 2015 is truly a seamless Chardonnay with a smooth transition from the front of the palate to the long finish. It is not as round and rich as the 2009 or 2012 Estate Chardonnays and has less smokiness than the 2013 and less pear fruit than the 2014. Feel free to enjoy it now as all the pieces are in unison but with each year aging in bottle more nutty and waxy notes will contribute further complexity and enjoyment. This is one of our favorite Chardonnays we have released to date as it shows true grace and intensity.

2015 Peay Vineyards Estate Roussanne/Marsanne, Sonoma Coast

The 2015 Estate Roussanne/Marsanne is one of the most harmonious Rhône blends we have made in years. The youthful nose highlights citrus and floral notes that pop on the fore-palate. As the wine moves down the tongue nutty and lanolin notes combine with beeswax, slate, and orange peel flavors on the very bright and crisp finish. There is a mineral component akin to dry Chenin Blanc and the acidity is lively but not tactile as it has been in certain years. It is not a fat or heavy wine like some Roussanne on the market as the lack of new oak allows the varieties’ characteristics to shine. This is a lovely wine to enjoy now but 2-3 years will result in a more unified expression and, if desired, the high acidity and low alcohol will allow the wine to hold up while oxidized funkiness emerges Continued on page 2
2015 Peay Vineyards Ama Estate Pinot noir, Sonoma Coast 350 cases

The 2015 Ama is a masculine Pinot noir combining the refinement found in the Scallop Shelf with the dark fruited rusticity of the Pomarium. More than any other wine we make, this cuvée hits squarely in the pleasure zone engaging the brain and the belly. The seductive dark cherry nose has elements of Chinese five spice rubbed smoked duck with a cherry compote. It is medium bodied and round with just enough juiciness in the mid-palate to make you reach for another glass. The finish is held together by our signature forest floor/bark flavors and refreshing acidity (lowest pH pinot we made in 2015.) The 2015 Ama is very enjoyable right now and will age well. Try a few bottles upon release and every few years to watch it evolve.

2015 Peay Vineyards Scallop Shelf Estate Pinot noir, Sonoma Coast 575 cases

The 2015 vintage created wines of poise, refinement, and balance and the 2015 Scallop Shelf is no exception. In the nose aromas of star anise and potpourri mingle with lingonberry, Rainier cherry and blood orange. The fore palate is consistent with the nose and the ever-present earthly and forest floor flavors found in our wines frame the fruit. The Scallop Shelf is medium bodied and evolves smoothly as it carries to the back of the mouth with silky tannins present at this stage which encourages aging the wine a few years to soften and allow further cohesion. The finish is clean and quite persistent and overall the wine embodies what we desire from our Pinot noirs; body without weight, lift with ballast, refinement with power. We encourage you to drink a bottle after it arrives and to open a few bottles every few years to see how the wine evolves. It should shine and become increasingly more interesting, though more subtle, up to at least 15 years from vintage.

2014 Peay Vineyards Les Titans Estate Syrah, Sonoma Coast 350 cases

Just from the color you can tell the 2014 Les Titans Syrah will be magnificent; it has an electric psychedelic purplish glow hinting at the energy present in the wine. The nose is a complete knockout with iron, grilled meat, hickory smoke, ink, and pain grillé aromas. The mouth is consistent with the nose combining power and precision. The finish is long and clean with great acidity and lingering notes of violets and squid ink. The Les Titans has everything you could hope for in cold climate Syrah with grace and focus and none of the one dimensional, heavy, leaden quality found in lesser wines. We suggest you drink a bottle upon release to see what is so exciting and then open a few every few years to watch it evolve into the single best Les Titans – and maybe even Syrah - we’ve ever made.

UPCOMING 2017 DINNERS & EVENTS

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I just spent four weeks in New York’s Finger Lakes region, right on Cayuga Lake next to Cornell University where my wife Ami was taking summer classes. On July 4th, we sat at a table at Good Life Farms overlooking a variegated expanse of small farms with clusters of trees, corn, vines, flowers, and feed ponds. The view and the warm and hazy day reminded us of trips to European wine country; specifically, of our trips to central-southeastern France from Burgundy down to Provence. Those lazy weeks are, sigh, in our relative far distant memory, before we embarked on child-rearing. Repeat, sigh.

During our stay in the Finger Lakes, I did my best to drink as many wines from the region as I could find. In some pursuits I can be dogged, and this is one, but I was not exhaustive and I am not an expert on the region. But it was a fun exercise and the task was not challenging to meet as the Finger Lakes is as provincial as European wine country where the Bordelaise only drink Bordeaux, the Burgundians only swirl Burgundy, etc. The whites from the region had some high spots with lovely, on-point: Riesling from Ravines, Empire Estate, and Randolph O’Neill, among others; Chardonnay from Weimer; Rkatsiteli from Konstantin Frank; and Rosé from Atwater and Sheldrake Point. I had a little more trouble finding red wines from the region that achieved balance, complexity, and deliciousness, yet they were almost all moderately priced. I asked myself why the reds lagged the whites in quality? Is it due to the impact of the geological history? The nature of the climate? The history of the region as a source of grape juice, sacramental wine, and wine coolers? I took a two prong approach to answering these questions. First, I drank the wines and came to my own conclusions about their character and quality. Second, I started gathering information from anyone involved with wine in the region, even some who no longer live here, in the case of Thomas Pastuszak the wine director at NOMAD in NYC who studied and lived here and makes wine from the region. Here is what I concluded about the region and its potential from my rigorous inquiries.

The Finger Lakes experience a classic continental climate with summer temperatures in the 80s with occasional afternoon rain showers, patchy cloud cover, and ample humidity. The northerly latitude and interior nature of the region results in a relatively short growing season with hazardous “shoulder” seasons that can be cold and wet delaying shoot development in the spring and abruptly ending much needed ripening weather in the fall. The deep and cold glacial lakes moderate some of the heat during very warm days (and importantly cold fronts during winter) but this is not cool temperature grape growing terroir. Yet, it is also not hot, sunny, and dry like many continental warm grape growing regions (think Tuscany, Rioja, Napa). Due to the northern latitude, the winters can get brutally cold with cold snaps below zero that kill many vines. Turns out most red wine *vitis vinifera* cannot handle extremely cold winter temperatures with exceptions like Pinot noir, Cabernet Franc, and a handful of others. A somewhat warm climate with a short and often humid growing season can be very tricky for a vigneron. The threat of downy mildew from spring, summer and fall rain can adversely affect quality and shorter hang time does not always allow some grapes to achieve sugar and, more importantly, the phenolic ripeness required for tannins to resolve, for fruit character to gain depth, and for wines to achieve harmonious balance. For a full explanation of the effect of phenolic development and hang time on creating high quality wine grapes, please see my 2007 article, *I am Cooler Than You* at our web site. Thus, looking only at climate, it is critical to grow grape varieties in the Finger Lakes that do not require very long hang time for phenolic ripeness and can thrive in a warm climate with occasional wet weather and cold winters. That is a challenge.

The geological history is also fascinating. The lakes were formed by retreating glaciers that carved finger-shaped gashes in the earth depositing a myriad of soils. You may find a mélange of soil types within a 100 yard radius. The underlying soil is shale (*Ithaca is Gorges* because of the plane, erosive nature of shale, ya know) with clay and limestone among other soils heaped on top. It can take time—even many generations—to...
discover where the optimal soils lie in a piece of land and to plant the right material. They have been at it for 7 or 8 generations but soil and material matching for achieving *quality* wine grapes was not considered until very recently.

Which brings me to the history of grape growing in the Finger Lakes. Starting in the 1800s, a handful of people planted clones of Chardonnay and Pinot noir from Champagne and some native species for sparkling wine production. Mostly people grew native grapes like Concord for juice (Welchs), for sacramental wine (Manischewitz), and for other wine beverages (Amber Mist, e.g.) Constellation Brands, the Fortune 500 alcohol conglomerate, was once called Canandaigua due its roots in Canandaigua, NY. It was not until the mid–1900s that anyone considered growing *vitis vinifera* for table wine—the species of European base material that most high quality table wine is made from. After Repeal, Ukranian born Dr. Konstantin Frank was hired to work at Cornell’s Geneva Experiment station and he convinced non-believers that certain *vitis vinifera* could survive the cold winters due to the moderating effects of the deep lakes but you needed to be careful which vinifera you planted. He looked to northern European varieties and started Vinifera Vineyards in the ‘60s finding success with Riesling. His protegé from Germany, Hermann Weimer, followed suit and planted over 100 acres of Riesling, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay and other varieties. Most grapes were not grown by wineries (the estate model), however, but by farmers who did not have a long history of growing for quality and were accustomed to farming for high yields which can be *very* high here due to rich soils. This can be problematic for not only making quality wine but high yields also delay ripening exacerbating the already short season’s negative effects on achieving phenolic ripeness. Winemakers and viticulturists with experience growing grapes for quality wine are a recent phenomenon and there has been a focus on planting the right clones (for Pinot and Chardonnay, for example) and for using more advanced farming practices like leaf pulling, row orientation, canopy management, etc. The potential of the region for producing great wines is likely to come.

So, what varieties will work in the Finger Lakes region? Pinot noir accumulates sugar quickly in a warm area (sugar accumulates based on heat, not hang time) so it can most likely be within an ideal sugar window when it is time to harvest. Pinot grapes are thin-skinned and susceptible to rot, however. Also the clones planted are mainly Champagne clones and they were not chosen for their fruit quality but for their acidity and for high yield. The best Finger Lakes Pinot noirs I tried were pretty but a touch simple and, in many cases, very tannic and vegetal. I suspect the clonal material and the short hang time contributed to the lack of depth of flavor and color I experienced. What about Cabernet Franc? It is thicker-skinned, does not require as much heat as Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon, and the slightly herbal, green flavors (slightly bell pepper, from pyrazines) of the grape found in cool climate Cab Francs can be part of its charm. Not a bad choice but I tried 4 or 5 and found they lacked a depth of flavor but were not bad for $20 a bottle. I heard there are really good ones out there, especially along the eastern side of Seneca Lake where it is a touch warmer. What about Gamay or the hippest of hip grapes that thrives in the Jura, Trousseau? I didn’t find either. Yet. Both Gamay and Trousseau are best when they get to show off their natural acidity, tartness of fruit, and freshness. Neither, in my opinion, requires depth of flavor for intrigue (though cru Beaujolais can be profound) and neither is a very complex wine (okay, now I said it, start slinging arrows at me.) I think these varieties could do really well here but I have been told by a person in the know in the that the cold winter temperatures below zero would likely kill the vines.

Should Riesling reign alone in the Finger Lakes or can other whites thrive here? Well, as a whole, it is easier to make good aromatic whites in a broad range of climates than it is to make age-worthy reds and whites. Fruit depth, length, and complexity require hang time and barrel aging and these attributes are less important in aromatic whites where raciness and vibrancy are key. Unripe and green notes oftentimes are prized in fresh whites (think petrol notes in Riesling). Konstantin Frank’s Rkatsiteli was an eye opener to me though the variety name needs, um, re-branding. I wonder when someone will try out Chenin Blanc? Not only is it very on trend right now, but it likes moderate temperatures, can handle dampness, does well in northerly latitudes in the Loire Valley, and is

*Continued on page 6*
Does your car tell you the outside temperature? This is not a new technology – I have a 1994 Lexus that can do that – but it is more widespread now, maybe universal. How important is it to know the exact temperature outside? For a farmer, a couple degrees make a big difference as it all adds up over the course of a growing season. I like to point out how a neighbor 14 miles to the south of our vineyard and a mile or two closer to the cold Pacific Ocean actually ends up being warmer than me due to their higher elevation. Over the course of the growing season, the sugar in their grapes accumulates more quickly in the hotter temperatures and they pick a week or two earlier. Of course, the winemaker can affect the ripeness, deciding when to pick (when she feels the grapes are at their peak in terms of making the best wine), and how much crop the vines should be allowed to carry (heavier crops take longer to ripen). But the weather and climate those vines and grapes experience dictate the parameters of what styles of wine can be made and a degree or two a day does make a difference in the character of the wine.

It is great fun to drive around and track how much the temperature varies over a very short distance. The terrain in coastal Sonoma County is quite hilly with occasional gaps in the ridges where rivers drain to the ocean. This affects the relative temperatures among the various coastal vineyards whose relative differences to one another also alters greatly depending on the time of day. At the end of my afternoon drive inland from the vineyard, for example, at 2,400’ looking down on the Dry Creek Valley floor the temperature difference is only a few degrees (it is warmer on the valley floor), and then cools a bit as I emerge from the sweltering heat of the trapped valley floor into Healdsburg. In the morning, however, when I drive in the reverse direction to the coast, the temperature difference can be quite extreme, as during the summer the valley floor is flooded with marine air, sometimes covered by a ceiling of fog and the mountain tops bask in the morning sun. To really complicate matters, in the spring and fall as I drive uphill from Healdsburg the temperature drops as the fog is not as prominent and often a strong wind is blowing in from the Pacific Ocean at altitude.

As I continue to drive west to the vineyard, I hit what we call Las Lomas Pass. It is the divide between the Russian River watershed and the Gualala River watershed. The high point at the pass is cooler than the 2,400’ foot mountain top above Lake Sonoma by a degree or two as there is nothing to the west shielding it from onshore winds. As I drop down into the east-west canyons I notice a return to the valley floor phenomenon – it is colder in the early morning, warmer in the midday/afternoon. Why is this? Well, cold air is heavier than warm air and so it sinks, settling to the lowest point. In the afternoon, the steep canyon walls situated far away from the Pacific Ocean trap the radiated heat from the sun’s rays and create a hot box of still air. As a result, the diurnal swing is greater in trapped interior valley floors than higher up in the air. Does that matter? Many people use degree days based on a 24 hour average temperature to determine what should be planted in any given region, whether it is grapes or another type of crop. The Russian River Valley has acceptable degree day summations for growing Pinot noir, yet it experiences significantly warmer daytime highs and lower evening lows as it is close to sea level. Does the vine care how low the temperature is at night so long as they are above freezing? No and yes. Without sunlight the vine is not actively growing so it is essentially “asleep,” and it doesn’t matter if the temperature is high or low. The Russian River Valley daily average includes those low night time temperatures. So, during growing hours, it is on average much hotter than the degree days metric indicates in the interior valleys like the Russian River Valley. Many of you know this empirically when you are sweating in 90° weather in the “cool” Russian River Valley.

It is more complicated than that, of course. Things are happening at night. We know the Krebs cycle is restoring those NADH’s and NADPH’s in preparation for the next sunlight, and other biochemical reactions may be running along, maybe in reverse directions as they run in the day, and the rate of these reactions are temperature dependent, faster when warm and slower when cold. Could it be that flavor compounds that were synthesized during the daylight hours are catabolized (broken down) during warm evenings? Maybe. Certainly something biochemical is happening at high elevation vineyards when their evenings stay warm, at the same time as the vines in
the cooler low elevation sites are quiescent.

Once I reach the canyon bottom, where Wolf Creek joins up with the Wheatfield Fork of the Gualala River, I follow the river downstream and out toward the Pacific Ocean, the source of the cold air. The road twists north and south as well as generally west, and there are distinct bends in the road beyond which you can see the temperature gradually drop. By the time you reach the bridge that takes you to our road, the Annapolis Road, you’ve reached the low temperature for the morning. The climb up to the hilltops will raise the temperature reading on your thermometer. Remember, this is the morning experience, the reverse is true after noon. As you crest out on Annapolis Road at roughly 770 feet at the old Ohlson Ranch, now planted to vines, the temperature steadies as you drive north into and out of the woods past the old Boyd Ranch and its vineyards. From there you drop down into the Fuller Creek drainage. Of course, it being morning, the temperature drops, but then as you climb up the other side toward the head of our driveway, the temperature does not rise quite to the same level as at the Ohlson Ranch as our bend in the ridge is closer to the coast and further out over the drainage. As you turn south through the gate onto our dirt driveway, the temperature drops another degree or two as you move further along the nose that peers over the Wheatfield Fork to the ocean. Yesterday afternoon (3:30 p.m.) when I drove in from the vineyard to Healdsburg, it was a warm 75° at our vineyard and it was 79° a mile east at the Ohlson Ranch. Sometimes it is only a degree or two warmer. Sometimes there is a wall of weakly offshore/high pressure which can be akin to driving through a transporter so dramatic is the temperature differential. This wall is often to the east of us, sometimes right on top of us and, rarely, to the west of us. What’s really neat and quite common is when the fog bank sits on top of the Miller Ridge to the west throughout the day keeping our temperatures cool, in the 60’s, maybe topping out briefly at 70° right before the coastal wind shoots up the canyon at noon.

All this discussion of temperature might be a tad tedious for the not-quite so geeky. I think it illuminates just how specific and how critical topography (how high, how exposed to ocean air) and geography (how close to the ocean, and the latitude on the west coast) are for vineyards on the coast. People frequently say our wine has great persistence and depth yet also subtlety and elegance of aroma. How is this so? This balance comes from the precise variations of our goldilocks location, not too high, not too low, and close enough to the ocean to be exposed to its cooling influence. This results in long growing seasons that allow for full flavor and tannin development without sacrificing acidity and accumulating too much sugar.

Time for me to head back to Healdsburg for dinner. I’ve got my fleece vest on over my t-shirt and I am wearing long pants. I will shed layers as I drive inland finding my own harmony with the micro-climates of my commute.

PEAY VINEYARDS

Peay Vineyards, 207A N. Cloverdale Blvd #201, Cloverdale, CA 95425 ● www.peayvineyards.com ● andy@peayvineyards.com
Last night Vanessa made this dish inspired by a pile of vibrant looking leeks and a passel of plump game hens. I like game hen better than chicken because it has a deeper, more intense flavor. You could use chicken thighs, however. One slight improvement would be to brine the bird for a few hours to enhance the sumptuous and flavorful nature of the dish.

- Nick Peay

To Brine:
2 game hens, 1 ½ to 1 ¾ pounds each
2/3 cup salt
1/3 cup sugar
1 teaspoon coriander seed
1 teaspoon fennel seed

Heat a couple cups of water, a cup of white wine or vermouth, coriander and fennel seeds and dissolve the sugar and salt in a pot that will just hold the birds. Turn off the heat when the water reaches 170 degrees F and stir to dissolve the sugar and salt. Cool back to below 120 degrees F by stirring in ice. Add birds to brine. If they are not covered by the brine add more water. Let sit at room temperature for a 2-4 hours.

To Prepare Hens:
2 medium carrots, trimmed, peeled
2 medium leeks, tender interior only, cleaned
1 ½ tsp fresh tarragon, minced
1 Bay leaf
1 ½ cups Vermouth or white wine
1 ½ cups chicken broth

Julienne the carrots and leeks into 1 ½ inch strips and toss with the tarragon and bay leaf and salt and pepper. Strew a third of the vegetable mix on the bottom of a covered casserole. Drain the game hen and quarter, then place in the casserole and cover with remaining vegetable mix. Pour in the wine and enough chicken broth to barely cover. Bring to a simmer, cover, and simmer slowly for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the hens are done (juices run clear when pricked). Let the hens steep in cooking liquid for 10 to 15 minutes.

To Prepare Sauce:
5 egg yolks
½ cup heavy cream
½ Tablespoon of cornstarch
3 Tablespoons fresh broadleaf parsley
Optional: shreds of chard, one small bunch, sautéed in 1 tsp of olive oil

Whisk the yolks and cream in a mixing bowl with the cornstarch. Gradually whisk in the drained hot cooking broth. Pour it over the game hens. A few minutes before serving, set the casserole over moderate heat and swirl slowly until the sauce is heated through and thickens. Don’t overheat or you will curdle the egg yolks! Ladle hens, vegetables and sauce in wide, shallow bowls, on top of small boiled potato halves (and chard if using).

Tip: You may also wish to skin the hens before saucing and remove meat from the bones but neither is necessary.
TO ORDER: Please use the link in the Fall Release email you received from us a few weeks ago to enter the site to purchase from your allocation. You can also head directly to our website www.peayvineyards.com and select Purchase. Please use the user name and password you received when joining the mailing list for your allocations. 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 Wine Shop 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. If you would like more than your allocation, please put your request in the wish list online or email me at andy@peayvineyards.com or Jenn at jenn@peayvineyards.com.

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CREDIT CARD (PREFER VISA & MC)
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SIGNATURE: ___________________________

BILLING ADDRESS
NAME ___________________________
CITY ___________________________ STATE ________ ZIP: __________ PHONE: __________
EMAIL ___________________________

SHIPPING:
There are 3 methods of shipping: UPS Ground, UPS 2 day air and Pick up at the Open House on November 11th.

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. They get lower rates from UPS for shipping wine than any other company in the business. We charge you what they charge us. If you get lower shipping rates from other wineries, they are subsidizing the cost of shipping. We decided not to raise our prices to cover that subsidy. Money is fungible and we prefer transparency with our customers. 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. You will receive your tracking notice via email 1-2 days before the delivery. 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. Most likely shipping will not start until October for “cool” states and will continue through December when we will ship to the majority of “warm” states.

UPS GROUND ___________ UPS 2 DAY AIR ______________ PICK UP on 11/11 _____________

SHIPPING ADDRESS (IF DIFFERENT THAN BILLING) NO P.O. BOXES, PREFER BUSINESS
NAME ___________________________
CITY ___________________________ STATE ________ ZIP: __________ PHONE: __________
EMAIL ___________________________