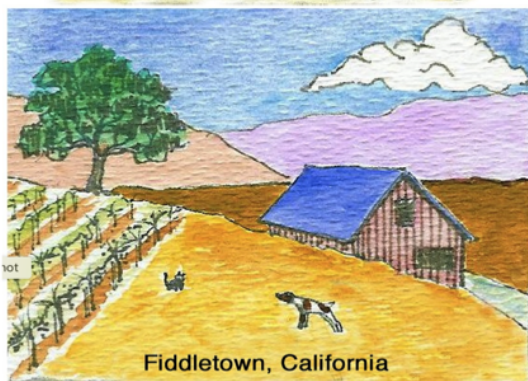


DAMAS VINEYARDS



Estate grown Zinfandel, extra virgin olive oil, fresh seasonal produce, and a variety of fruits and nuts – www.damasvineyards.com

We are almost at the end of our rainy season and have scored around 32" of rain – almost exactly average for our area, so it's an excellent start to our growing season. Deborah has finished pruning the fruit and nut trees and is starting on the olives. Jaime has finished pruning the vineyard. Mara has planted fava beans, garlic, onions, peas, and potatoes and is now preparing raised beds for the summer planting.

NEWS FROM DAMAS VINEYARDS APRIL 2024

After several cool, wet months--during which we gloried in having to quit outdoor work early due to shorter hours of daylight and enjoy evenings reading by the fire (well, after some hard days of troubleshooting tractor problems)--Spring is here! We still have light showers and even some real rain occasionally. But we've also enjoyed sunny days that make one want to get out the T-shirts. Asparagus spears are popping up. And the cascade of spring blossoms is ongoing – daffodils, poppies, fruit trees, with the promise of more budding over the coming weeks and months.

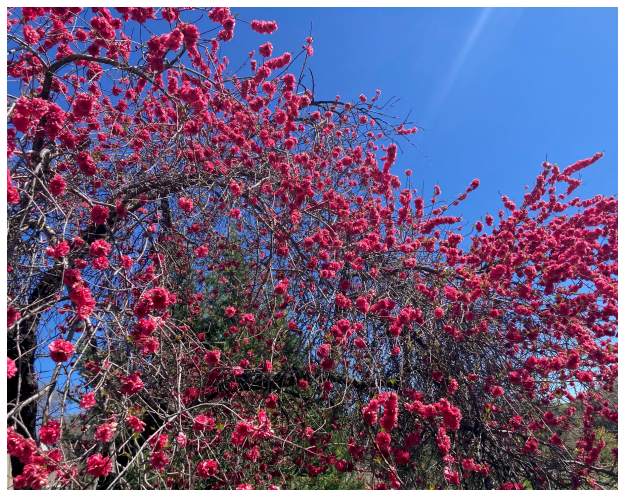


EXCITING NEW WHITE WINES JOINING THE DAMAS LINEUP IN 2024!

In the early years of finding ourselves unexpectedly in the wine business, we would be invited to participate in wine-tasting events. People responded positively to our Zinfandels but often would ask: "What else have you got?" We could offer them a vertical tasting of our estate-grown Zins from different vintages, but no whites or rosés. Not much variety.

We listened to our customers. On a hot summer day, Zinfandel can make you feel like your tongue is wearing a mitten. We also prefer a cool, crisp wine sometimes, and white wine pairs better with certain foods (although Zin can be good even with Cheerios in certain conditions 😊).

We began purchasing small lots of white wine grapes to add diversity to our lineup, and our customers responded with glee. Our winemakers would alert us to grapes or white wines that local growers or wineries wanted to sell. We started to sample (tough work, but someone has to do it) and to buy. We began with a Pinot Gris, then moved on to Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, and Rhone wine blends. We also commissioned our winemakers (Tom and Eric) to purchase local white Rhone varietals to make serious Rhone blends of Roussanne, Marsanne, and Viognier for our label. The resulting wine, our "Shenandoah Blanc," did very well in wine competitions, earning gold medals in the Amador County and Orange County wine competitions.



In recent years, with the help of our grape-buying sleuths, we've been able to add an excellent Picpoul (a white varietal from the southern Rhone) and an Albariño (a white varietal from northeastern Spain)--both made by our long-time winemaker and friend, Tom Leaf. While taking inventory recently, however, we discovered we are running very low on both varietals. We still have a decent supply of our 2018 Shenandoah Blanc (a Rhone blend of Viognier and Roussanne) made by Eric Hays, and it continues to age nicely.

But our customers want variety, and we want to satisfy them! Thus, we launched a new search. We asked our acquaintances in the local wine industry if they knew of some exceptional wine that might be available to purchase. Eric Hays, our other long-term winemaker from Chateau Davell, happened to have a couple of barrels of Roussanne he'd made from grapes he sourced from a small vineyard in Lodi. We tasted it among other candidates and decided the Roussanne was a winner. We bought it and bottled it under our DAMAS label.

ROUSSANNE

Roussanne (Roo-sahn) is a white varietal traditionally grown in the Northern Rhone Valley of France. Roussanne is typically blended with Marsanne and sometimes Viognier or Grenache Blanc in the making of classic white Rhone wines. It requires warm, sunny conditions to ripen, so it is well-suited to Northern California and especially the Central Valley and Paso Robles. It's challenging to grow because the grapes are small and grow in tight bunches. Compact clusters do not allow good air circulation among the grapes, so they can be prone to mildew. Furthermore, yields are typically low. For these reasons, there is not a lot of Roussanne grown, even in France, and California has less than 500 acres planted.

The Hux vineyard Roussanne is medium bodied, with good acidity and a touch of minerality. It has aromas of apricots, lemon blossom, and fresh flowers. The taste is elegant, with lingering hints of lemon, honey, and apricot. This wine pairs well with shellfish, fish, chicken, asparagus soufflé and cheese plates.

DAMAS VINEYARDS



2023 Roussanne
Hux Vineyard

Subsequently, we were pleasantly surprised to find out we know the grower! Tom Leaf had introduced us years ago to his friend Dave Hueckstadt and wife Barbara, who'd planted their vineyard in Lodi around the same time we were planting ours. We'd chosen to focus on two acres of Zinfandel, but Dave and Barb followed a different drummer. They planted small quantities of uncommon and rare grape varietals, mostly of Mediterranean origin. Alas, Dave died a decade or so after we met him, but Barb carried on managing their vineyard and won acclaim as a grower. Randy Caparoso, a Lodi area wine blogger, called Hux Vineyard "one of Lodi's little-wineries-that-could." He noted that Barb is particularly proud of her Roussanne, a Rhone grape used to produce intense, aromatic wines in famous appellations like Crozes-Hermitage and Chateauneuf-du-Pape. We're delighted to offer this new white wine to our customers while supporting another woman in the wine business.

As if that weren't enough excitement...

Soon after we'd arranged for the purchase and bottling of the Roussanne, our neighbor, renowned winemaker Bill Easton, mentioned that he'd recently tasted a Viognier (another white Rhone varietal, pronounced Vee-own-yay) made by Stewart Johnson of Kendric Vineyards that he thought was outstanding. Bill should know. He is one of the original Rhone Rangers, who promoted the cultivation of Rhone varietals in northern California, recognizing that our climate is very similar to the Rhone Valley of France. Bill received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Rhone Rangers in 2016, his winery is often listed in Wine & Spirit's *Top 100 Wineries of the World*, and his Ascent Syrah scored a perfect 100 points from Wine Enthusiast, not once but for two separate vintages. When Bill spoke, we paid attention. We contacted Stewart and visited his winemaking facility on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay to taste that wine. We loved it, too. So, we purchased a pallet for our label.

Like Dave and Barbara Heucksteadt, Stewart Johnson was inspired by the Rhone Rangers and planted Rhone varietals in his small Petaluma Gap vineyard. Petaluma Gap is a relatively new AVA (designated in 2017) straddling northern Marin and southern Sonoma counties. It achieved recognition due to its unique soils and climactic conditions. The Gap is an area of relatively low-lying lands stretching from the Pacific coast between Bodega and Tomales Bays and eastward to San Pablo Bay. This "gap" in the coastal mountains allows cool ocean breezes and fog to flow inland, resulting in cool mornings, sunny afternoons, and windy evenings. It is one of the cooler microclimates in which California Viognier is grown, lending the wine unique flavors and complexity.

This wine is medium- to full-bodied with rich aromas of citrus and honey. It has excellent acidity, with flavors of peach, apricot and almond, a subtle minerality, and a long and nicely balanced finish. The aromatic and fruit forward nature of the grape allows Viognier to pair well with richer sauces without overwhelming lighter fish and poultry. It is fabulous with shellfish, sea bass, chicken piccata, fish curry, and a wide variety of cheeses.

See attached price sheet for current offerings--including newly bottled olive oil and new white wines.

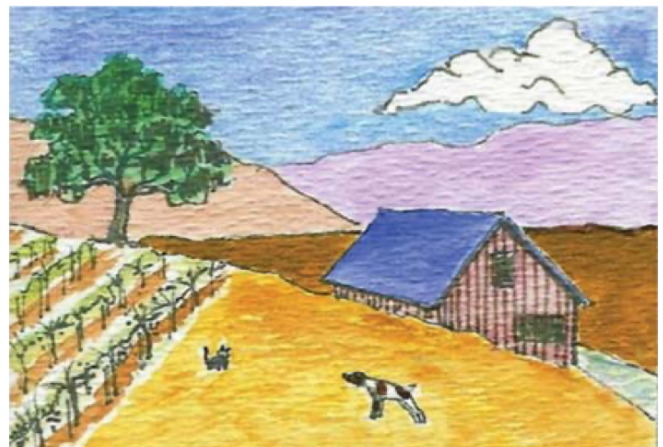
All for now. Happy Spring, everyone.

Mara & Deborah

A NOTE ABOUT SB1013

The California Redemption Value (CRV) has been around for years. We've been paying the deposit on soda and beer cans and bottles to encourage recycling. Under SB1013, the CRV law has been expanded to cover more beverages, including any beverage containing alcohol at or above 7% by volume. As of January 1, 2024, sellers (like us) must collect this tax, which amounts to ten cents per 750ml wine bottle--and file monthly reports and payments with the State. Sigh. That's the new law in a nutshell.

DAMAS VINEYARDS



2022 Viognier Kendric Vineyard Petaluma Gap