

## Message from the Boss



A happy spring to all of our wine club members, entering into an exciting new year full of potential and hope. We have new members of our team, new vintages, and... I'd write more, but I know Melissa has a lot to say this newsletter, and I've learned when to let her talk.

Regards,  
*Bruce Schmidt*

## Message from the Moss



I asked Mel for her article and she handed me the comprehensive history of wine, food, the universe, and everything! So if you really need to hear my voice this month I suppose you can go listen to the new season of the wine education podcast I host: "Uncork the Sun with the Vinstitute Wine School."

Cheers!  
*Moss*

## Much to Say About Wine



*Melissa Smits:*  
*Lead Winemaker and*  
*Vineyard Manager*

Hello again to our wine Collectors and Enthusiasts!

I was reviewing my notes from last spring and despite how much has changed, the vineyard and winery remain pretty much the same. It's been a quiet island where I can come to prune plants, stir barrels and top reds, and check on maturity of the next vintages. The gradual pace of this maturity is a relief and because we're small, I can afford to be careful. Some times of year can be hectic in the wine industry, but overall I find wine-making to be a low-pressure art form that I'm glad we can all enjoy. Our "recipe" is consistent: focus first on the health of the vineyard, observe changes carefully and with interest, research the unexpected, and show maintenance and care over the wine's maturity. And as artists, the Okanagan serves as the finest studio we could ask for.

It's been exciting to finish and bottle our 2020 Rosé earlier than ever, and even though it's only been "home" for a few weeks, it's ready to drink now. It's 100% Merlot, and if you accepted our 6th bottle recommendation for this pack, fans and new members alike will find an intense wine that's very brightly coloured, with grapefruit and fresh strawberry prominent on the nose, and integrated alcohol and acidity. It matches well with everything except hot chiles (as a rule I tend to be careful with high-alcohol wines and spice. Their combination can make a lit oxyacetylene torch look cool by comparison.) This wine has nearly zero residual sugar but the alcohol gives the impression of sweetness. Spicy food works much better with the Riesling instead, and the 2019 Viognier-Marsanne goes well with Thai green curry, in my home food-and-wine experiments so far. With the Rosé, try a seared pork tenderloin brushed with maple syrup and garam masala: the woody spice will amp up all that fresh fruit while offering a nice aromatic contrast.

Our 2019 Viognier-Marsanne is here, in a new bottle (hooray!), which should show

its lovely straw/honey colour and brightness, and as well we've used a screwcap so it has even more potential to age. This process is slowed by an air-tight closure, so the only oxygen aging the wine is what's retained in the bottle. Responses from our fans verify that our big white wines show quite well with age, and while this is approachable now (full of fresh white tree-blossom, acacia, clover honey and fresh Asian pear notes), it will retain these vibrant characters for 3 to 5 more years, potentially even longer! Pair this one with a nice oyster mushroom tartine on a thick slice of sourdough (which I think a few of us may have been perfecting in the past year). It'll match the mid-palate weight of the wine and elevate the bright orange fruit of the Marsanne, which in this vintage is just about 17% of the blend.

Another wine from 2019 is making its début in this pack: our Milepost Merlot! This wine has been a joy to work with and showcases Merlot's flexibility in a rainy vintage. Around the time of harvest in 2019 we were delayed by showers, but due to its early ripening tendencies and moderate tannin, we weren't worried about its condition. 'Clone 347' Merlot produces juicy, familiar fruit and the resultant wine has lots of fresh cherry and blueberry, with a hint of clove and cinnamon from the smallest portion of new French oak - not usually more than 5%. The remainder of the barrels are older French oak, which serve as an ideal maturation environment without excessive woody or smoky flavours. I'm a big fan of Vietnamese food, so I've included my recipe for Hoi An chicken pizza to go alongside, and as a bonus I'll post my classic tomato-based pizza sauce recipe as well. *(While others perfected sourdough with their free time, I studied high-hydration pizza crusts and even played around with spelt and rice crusts. The spelt has given me more consistent results, so that one's included here. Hoi An chicken is my definition of comfort food: easy to prepare with a bright burst of fresh mint, and it will also go well on a white demi-baguette with quick-pickled daikon, cabbage and carrot, or whichever fresh greens you enjoy. It's spring now, so use those home-grown micro-greens!)*

Finally, I'd like to talk about our 2015 Axiom, which is one of the first wines I worked with when I started at Intersection in July 2016. My first task was to taste and categorize 110 red barrels! It took a full week of exhaustive, analytical tasting. Tough job, but very exciting. 2015 was a hot year with impressive development on all our big reds, including Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon from some trusted vineyards. I chose two barrels of Merlot (one Silica, one Alluvia) as well as four of my favourites from the Cabs. We blended those barrels in tank and racked them after settling several times to separate the clear wine from the lees - normally composed of tannins. Tannins are polymeric compounds that slowly join together into larger chains, but as they get bigger and heavier they fall out of solution. As red wines age this can happen in the bottle, and sometimes those long-chain polymers will bring a colour compound along for the ride (the reason that reds get lighter/tawnier in colour as they mature). The Axiom is unfiltered, so you may find a little sediment in the bottle. We recommend to decant it for an hour or two, ideally having stood upright for a few hours first. I made a smoked gorgonzola and mushroom white wine sauce to experiment with as another pizza base, using caramelized onions, diced red bell pepper and crispy bacon, and it was a show-stopper. This sauce would go well on fresh homemade papardelle or gnocchi, matching toasty oak to the smoky, funky cheese, creaminess to balance the tannin in the wine and sweet/savoury flavours to elevate the aromas of plum preserves, mulberry and stewed black cherry. Keep this one for 5-10 years in cellar as it's bound to develop into an expressive, smooth Okanagan red, demonstrating the prized qualities of our region.

Thank you as always for being part of our wine club! We always love to hear of your experiences with our wines, especially with food matches, so please write us an email or tag our Instagram or Facebook pages.

I'm looking forward to another year of great food and wine, and an optimistic early spring!

*Melissa*

## Mel's "Hội An" Pizza

Pair with 2019 Milepost

*Soy-Chili Sauce and Shallots*

- ✗ 50 ml soy sauce
- ✗ 2 tbsp. lime juice
- ✗ 1/2 tbsp. white sugar
- ✗ 1 tbsp. chili paste
- ✗ 1 tbsp. fish sauce
- ✗ 1 cup peanut oil
- ✗ 1 cup vegetable oil
- ✗ shallots (at least 6 medium-sized. They're so delicious you'll want to make lots!)

1. Combine in a small bowl or jar: soy sauce, lime juice, sugar, chili paste (I use Huy Fong chili and garlic sauce), and fish sauce. Adjust to taste. Stir until the sugar dissolves. (Make double if you want to make Hội An chicken for your next meal.)

2. Peel and thinly slice 6-8 shallots lengthwise into slivers. Heat vegetable oil and peanut oil in a deep cast iron skillet or saucepan (only a couple cm needed). Fry the shallots in small batches until light gold, set aside in a bowl.

### *Pizza Prep*

- ✗ prepared pizza dough (see website for Mel's recipe)
- ✗ 2 cups shredded chicken
- ✗ 2 green onions, sliced
- ✗ 125 g Monterey Jack or skim mozzarella, shredded
- ✗ 1 tsp toasted sesame seeds
- ✗ 1 tsp of peanut oil
- ✗ your soy-chili sauce and fried shallots
- ✗ fresh chopped mint and micro greens to serve

1. Let the pizza dough warm up a little. Mix some of the soy-chili sauce into the shredded chicken to coat and set aside. Preheat the oven to 400° F.

2. When the pizza dough is just slightly cool, roll it flat with a rolling pin or stretch carefully by hand. I use parchment paper on a baking sheet, but if you have a stone you may want to adjust your preparation to suit that.

3. Brush the dough with peanut oil and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Cover with the shredded cheese, chicken, and green onion.

Very important! Only top the pizza with the fried shallots after it's done cooking, else they'll go soggy or burn!

Drizzle the pizza with a little extra of the soy-chili sauce, or keep the spare sauce to apply later.

4. Bake about 12-14 minutes, rotating halfway through the cook time.

5. Remove pizza when the crust has browned nicely and the cheese is bubbling. Dress with the fried shallots, finely chopped mint leaves and micro-greens.

The mint is a real game-changer here, with its freshness contrasting the savoury sauce and shallots, and the bit of heat from the chili.

Serve paired with either the '19 V-M or the '19 Milepost.

Photos on our website (below)



### **2016 Riesling** Drink now through 2024 (optimal 2019-2021) - 650 cases made

The Riesling continues to be a classic, a beautifully developing wine with many years still ahead of it (and a wine we try to hold onto as long as we can to allow for that development.) The residual sugar, pinpointed by tasting during fermentation, is kept in balance by the acidity, resulting in a beautiful honeyed citrus flavour. As the wine ages these two components find even greater harmony.

Pair with ginger pineapple chicken or classic breaded fish and chips.



### **2019 Viognier-Marsanne** Drink now through 2025 (optimal 2021-2023) - 278 cases made

Our new Rhone blend is approachable immediately, but holds much potential for ageing (as we like to see in Intersection whites.) A delicate medley of peach cobbler and white flowers, the Vio-Mars balances the Marsanne's earthiness with the Viognier's aromatic fruit.

Complex and rewarding with food, try with oysters, pork terrine, or sushi.

### **2019 Milepost Merlot** Drink now through 2026 (optimal 2021-2023) - 700 cases made

A vibrant new vintage of our fan favourite Merlot. Produced from a different clone of Merlot than our Silica and Alluvia, the Milepost's grapes bear larger bunches and berries. When combined with a gentle, neutral oak program, the result is a lower tannin, bright, fruit-forward Merlot. Cherry and mixed red berry jam on the nose are highlighted by a touch of clove and cinnamon.

Pair with Mel's delicious homemade pizza or with buttermilk fried chicken.

### **2016 Alluvia Merlot** Drink now through 2029 (optimal 2021-2025) - 296 cases made

Showing off some of the balanced nuance of the 2016 year, the Alluvia brings a full-bodied palate of dark fruit together with baking spice and earthiness, enhanced by a year in partly-new French oak. A versatile and smooth drinking wine that opens up aromas of anise when decanted.

Pair with lean meats and hearty vegetables.



### **2015 Axiom** Drink now through 2030 (optimal 2024-2027) - 138 cases made

The second vintage of our acclaimed Bordeaux-style blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Cabernet Sauvignon is the true heir to its predecessor's fame. Toasty graphite and blackberry on the nose leads to blackcurrant, liquorice, and coffee on the palate. Complex, balanced, and bursting with rich texture already, this is a wine that will only improve with time... if you can allow it to.

Enjoy with foods that can match its density. Try lamb meatballs or a well-spiced steak.

More tasting notes: [www.xwine.ca/wine-list](http://www.xwine.ca/wine-list)

More issues of the CrossWord with articles and recipes: [www.xwine.ca/crossword](http://www.xwine.ca/crossword)

More of Mel's cookery (including her pizza dough): [www.xwine.ca/cooking](http://www.xwine.ca/cooking)