



## There's a New Winemaker in Town



Sixteen years ago I was spending every Friday and Saturday night deep in the bustling, hot, sticky kitchen of Park Place restaurant in Lakeport. I was a senior in high school and aggressively in charge as grill cook. At that time I was fully aware of the numerous wine bottles emptied by happy patrons every night, and the occasional Chablis box wine mixed with Sprite. Winemaking was nowhere near my top ten career choices... becoming a chef was.

A year later I landed a job on a five man fire engine, working as a wild land firefighter. Since the job was seasonal, I had visions of fighting fire in the summer months in remote forests, and cooking in restaurants during the winter months. I spent three years working this routine and at the same time attending junior college. While cooking in high-end kitchens in Sonoma County, my palate was spoiled with sea bass, filet mignon, ahi tuna, and a wide variety of expensive fine wines. The combination of consuming these pleasures, and never missing a viticulture class, was quickly luring me into the wine business.

I left the stressful low paying job in kitchens, and was hired on at a vineyard management company, mainly managing vineyards in the Dry Creek appellation.

This new job lit a passion for the wine industry, and weighed in heavily on my decision for a career change.

A short time later I heard through the grapevine that a winemaker in my home town needed an assistant. He needed a person who spoke English, cared about the job at hand, and, most importantly, could work. This winemaker, Mark Burch, decided to test me. I spent my first week on the fun-filled, muggy, boring, ear piercing bottling line. He couldn't scare me away.

After two weeks into the crush of '02, I was sold on wanting to become a winemaker. One and a half years later, I was enrolled as an enology major at Fresno State University. I had the opportunity of performing fermentation on biodynamic farmed grapes into wine, and following up on distilling them with a modern copper German still. All the while, I was becoming mentally exhausted in the enology curriculum. Brandy production and the art of distillation was being embedded into me like red wine on white carpet.

The past three years have been spent working with Mark here at Wildhurst, producing a variety of wines from many different parcels of land. I am very confident in making wine from Lake County fruit, as well as becoming a key player in the promotion and production of Lake County wines.

It's the second week of August as I write this, and I am filled with excitement, anxiety, and nervousness, all competing together to dominate my mood on any given day. Mainly I am constantly thinking about the grapes, are they ever going to start veraison? What about ripening and maturity? Are we headed into the same outcome as last year, with early rains and

cool temperatures? This could result in catastrophic consequences considering we lost over thirty days growing season in the beginning of the year. These thoughts are all part of the package of being a winemaker, and are nothing new to me, just a little more stressful.

In all my past work leading up to winemaking, it was the people I worked and studied with that sparked my passion in each field. Mark Burch has been an incredible influence and mentor in my winemaking capabilities. I already feel a bit of emptiness in knowing Mark won't be here during harvest, to watch the sun go down, and enjoy dinner with the cellar crew, while being engulfed in pleasant aromas of rigorous fermentations.

The crew and I hope that Mark will find time to enjoy one of these evenings with us this year. Of course that is, if he has a six pack of strong hoppy brews in each hand. I am eager to see what Mark has in store for his new adventures in winemaking. What ever he does it will be a win for him, a win for the Lake County wine industry, and a win for the consumer.

I wish Mark the best of luck and a thousand gondolas of thanks for all he has done for me, and the Lake County wine business. He will be missed. Most important of all, he is a solid, trustworthy, lifelong friend for me. Thank you so much Mark Burch.

Banyon Kirkendall

Wildhurst Vineyards Winemaker



## Changing of the Guard



**Full circle:** It all started right here in September of 2002, working part time at the Wildhurst tasting room.

Still new to the county, and working fulltime as a chef in Ukiah, I had hoped that I could use my experience to get a foot in the door at a winery. Wildhurst Vineyards gave me that opportunity.

After only a few days onboard, I worked the Kelseyville Pear Festival and the Wildhurst Harvest Party. What a show! People were coming out by the thousands. There was great food, the wines were pouring freely, and I finally felt free of four walls. I remember thinking to myself "I could get used to this kind of fun!" After being corralled in a kitchen for 20 plus years, it really felt good to get out, and be around so many fun people. I was reborn. I made a commitment to myself and to Wildhurst to manage the wine club with all my heart and ability.

I quit my job as a chef, shifting my focus entirely towards this great industry. Why not? I could have it all. Good food, meet new people, all the great wine I could possibly drink, and yes, I could still cook!

Three years later, opportunity led me out of the county to do various winery related jobs, including; food and wine pairing, research and development for winery and wine club software, outside sales, and tasting room management.

Feeling like I had collected the full bag of tricks I had set out to get, I was eager, I was armed, I was hungry, I was ready, and I was tired of driving back and forth over Hopland grade twice a day. If you've ever done it, you know what I mean. I wanted to be back in Lake County. So now what? When offered a job back at Wildhurst to work in the cellar for six months, I jumped at the chance. It eventually led to outside sales and right back to the tasting room. **Déjà vu I'm back!!!** I've come full circle and gearing up, once again, for the Pear Festival and Harvest Party. I am ready to put the knowledge I have gained to work.

Visit us in the tasting room when you're in the neighborhood and see what we're up to. Feel the excitement as we prepare for the 2011 harvest, changing of the season, and the planning for exciting new events.

We have added two new, very talented people to the team; Megan Hoberg and Tonya Little. They will ensure that all of your membership needs are met. You and your

guests are in good hands with these two while tasting through the Wildhurst wines, or shopping our new Fall selections.

Also our rock, Brent Liner has taken on the merchandising and outside sales. The tasting room has never looked better, thanks Brent! Hans Dobusch, a longtime favorite, will be organizing our shipping needs, and working on the tasting room counter. We'll be waiting with open arms (and open bottles!) We're looking forward to seeing you all again.

Don Bocca  
Tasting Room Manger



## We've done it again!

Wildhurst Vineyards was awarded a Four Star Gold on our 2010 Sauvignon Blanc at the 2011 Orange County Wine Competition, held this past June. In addition to this very prestigious award, we received a Gold medal for the same wine in the Riverside International Wine Competition and the Chairman's award (unanimous Gold rating) and another Gold at the 2011 North of the Gate Wine Competition. This wine will get even more attention. We'll keep you posted.

## Ramblings "Winds of Change"



**Climate change.** As I write these notes on the current grape growing season, we are again looking at a late harvest--probably at least two weeks late. We had consistent cool weather from mid May to July 4th. This is the second consecutive year for these cooler growing temperatures. I guess this called climate change, not global warming.

**Winemaker change:** Mark Burch, after 14 different vintages, crushes, and years at Wildhurst, has decided to do some different projects. Since Mark arrived at Wildhurst in 1997, he has left a very positive influence on our winemaking, growing of grapes, and the training of our winemaking staff. Mark has always presented our wines to distributors

and our consumers in a very enthusiastic, passionate fashion. He has also been a positive influence on the perception of Lake County grape quality, to the winepress and County guests. Banyon Kirkendall, Mark's assistant is stepping into the position of Wildhurst winemaker. Banyon, who grew up in Lakeport, completed his Enology degree at Fresno State and has been the assistant winemaker for the last four years. Mark will continue to consult with Banyon on Wildhurst production to help maintain the wine style he started.

**Tasting Room Change:** Valerie Ramirez has stepped away from the Tasting Room as Manager. She has decided to pursue other interests and spend more time with her large family. We will miss Valerie's

ready smile and her loyalty to Wildhurst and our customers. Valerie created a very positive image for Wildhurst at events as well as in our Tasting Room. We wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Our new Tasting Room manger is Don Bocca. He has been our outside sales representative as well as the producer of all our sales materials in hard copy and on the Web. Don rejoined Wildhurst last fall after taking time out to manage tasting rooms at Milano Winery in Hopland, and Villa La Brenta in Clearlake.

Change is in the air, another Crush is coming with the next Vintage at Wildhurst.

Thanks again to Mark and Valerie for a job well done. Myron Holdenried



# Wine Club News - Lake County Events - DeVine News



## Hello Wildhurst fans!

I am excited to be the new wine club manager for Wildhurst Vineyards. I've been in Lake County for about two years. My husband, Jacob Hoberg, was raised in Kelseyville and went all the way to Oklahoma State University to learn a few things. We met; and he swept me off my feet.

We decided to move to Las Vegas right after we graduated. In 2009, after a couple of years in the extreme heat, we moved to Kelseyville. My husband could start his own business, and I could enjoy being outside again. I'm a long time runner and a beginner cyclist. I love the gorgeous scenery that the area provides for outdoor activities.

Please stop by the tasting room and introduce yourself. I'm here if you have any questions, concerns, or just want to chat.

Megan Hoberg  
Wine Club Manager



Wine Adventure 2011 at Wildhurst Tasting Room

All enjoyed the fine wines of Lake County while being served delicious hors d'oeuvres. The Wine Adventure Weekend, traditionally held the last weekend in July, was well attended. If you haven't joined in on the fun, you're definitely missing out. We'll keep you posted for next year's dates and participating wineries.



Featured Employee

**Tonya Little** joins the team with her passion to learn about wine. With a solid customer service background, you're sure to feel at home with her warm hospitality.

**What is Veraison?** Veraison marks the stage in vine ripening when the grapes go from little, hard green berries to softer, colored grapes. It usually occurs from early July to mid-August. A few things happen during this process:

**First**, the sugar and acid ratio switches. When the little berries begin, the acid content is much higher than sugar. During veraison, the sugar content increases and acid decreases, making the berries softer and plumper, looking more like actual grapes.

**Second**, the color changes. Till now, the grapes looked like little green peas.



Wildhurst Cabernet during veraison

Veraison takes them from this stage to actual grape stage. For white varieties, this means that they become a softer, transparent yellow-green color. For red varieties, it's more obvious, taking the grape from bright green to red or purple.

## Special Events - Wildhurst Supports Community

### Saturday, September 17

**Lake County Wine Alliance Auction**, Ceago Vinegardens, Live and silent auction, wine, food and live music. Visit [www.winealliance.org](http://www.winealliance.org) for details.

### Friday, September 23

**Dave Stamey Concert**, cowboy poet singer. Kick off to the Kelseyville Pear Festival with a BBQ under the stars at the Wildhurst Vineyards Tasting Room. For tickets and information; Call 800-595-WINE.

### Saturday, September 24

**Kelseyville Pear Festival**, Main Street, Kelseyville, 9a.m.-4p.m. A celebration of a rich agricultural heritage with a parade, quilt show, music, exhibits and much more. [www.kelseyvillepearfestival.com](http://www.kelseyvillepearfestival.com)

### Sunday, September 25

**Wildhurst Vineyards Harvest Party** 4-7p.m. Join us in the tasting room courtyard for an afternoon of great wine, music, food and friends. Featuring authentic Cajun cuisine by Rosemary Martin. Cajun, Zydeco and New Orleans Blues music by the Tri Tip Trio. For details call 800-595-WINE.



### Friday, November 4

**"Girls Just Wanna Have Wine"** Girlfriends' night out, 5-8 p.m. Theme; "The Roaring 20's" While Drinking Wine," with categories of most authentic apparel, sexiest, and most authentic hair and makeup. \$7 per girl. Wildhurst Tasting Room, rsvn recommended; 707-279-4302.

### Friday, December 2

**Christmas in the Country** 6:30-9 p.m. Annual light parade, tree lighting and merchant open house. The perfect family outing as Kelseyville shows their hospitality with refreshments, goodies and entertainment. Free admission. Call for information and reservations, 707-279-4302

### Saturday, December 10

**Wine Club Appreciation Party** 5-8 p.m. This annual event is exclusive and free to club members and their guest's. Live music! Food you can sink your teeth into! Raffle prizes! All in honor of you, our valued club members! Wildhurst Vineyards Tasting Room and Courtyard, 3855 Main Street, Kelseyville. Call for information and reservations, 707-279-4302

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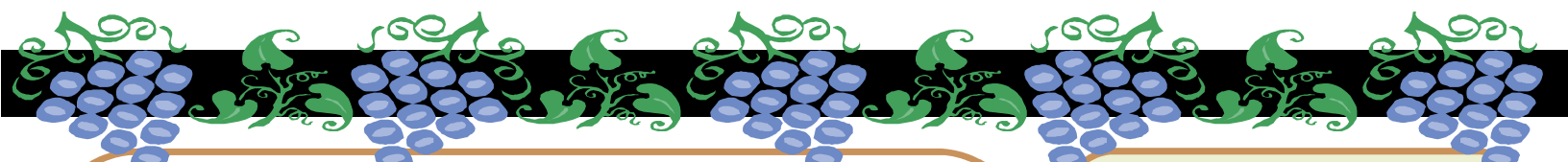
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[www.wildhurst.com](http://www.wildhurst.com)


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## Featured Wines for September

 **2009 Home Ranch Zinfandel, Lake County** - Mellow floral raspberries intermix pencil shavings and slight toastiness. Vanilla and cracked pepper linger in the aromatics derived from new American oak. The palate is awakened by lively acidity and smooth tannins which sneak up on the finish. Composed of 93% Zinfandel, Holdenried Ranch, and 7% Petite Sirah, Tredway Vineyards. Fermented 100% in stainless; with 100% barrel-aged for 18 months in oak. 15.6% alcohol.

Retail: \$29

Aging potential: 5-8 years

Cases produced: 249

 **2009 Reserve Merlot, Lake County** - This wine awakens with strong, dried fruit and vanilla, followed with mocha notes and smoked maple bacon. Soft tannins and juicy acidity coat the mid-palate for a lingering chocolaty toast finish. Composed of 95% Merlot, Holdenried Ranch, 5% Petite Sirah, Tredway Vineyards. Fermented 100% in stainless; 100% barrel-aged for 18 months in oak. 13.8% alcohol.

Retail: \$16

Aging potential: 5-8 years

Cases produced: 422

**Wine Club Members: Please pick up your wines within the next 30 days.**

**TASTING ROOM OPEN DAILY 10-5**

## Wildhurst Harvest Party!

**Sunday, September 25th  
4-7 p.m.**

**Tasting Room Courtyard**

Cajun is the theme,  
all served up with live  
Zydeco and Louisiana  
Blues with authentic  
Southern cuisine.

**Check out the band:**  
[www.tritiptrio.com](http://www.tritiptrio.com)



**Reservations required**