

WINE



PRESS

Gold Medal Wine Club Newsletter: Vol. 18 No. 11



B

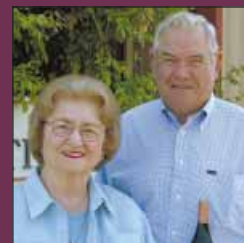
ALLENTINE VINEYARDS
UPHOLDS A RICH HISTORY
WITH OLD VINE WINES IN
PRESTIGIOUS NAPA VALLEY.



To date, Owner Van Ballentine has worked more than 60 vintages in Napa Valley.



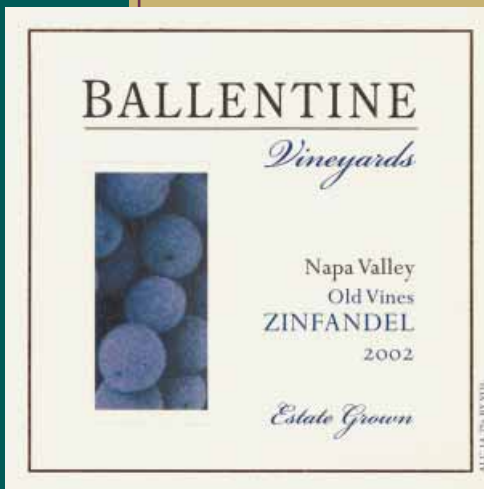
Ballentine Vineyards comprises some of the oldest planted properties of the region, one dating back to 1906.



Van and Betty Ballentine are both descendents of Napa Valley pioneering families.



Old Vine Zinfandel is a hard animal to track in Napa Valley. Almost extinct, with the abundance of Cabernet Sauvignon populating the idyllic vineyards of the valley, this intense colored, silky natured Old Vines Zinfandel from Ballentine Vineyards is a rare find that maintains an exceptional sense of varietal focus with great extraction of complex fruit flavors. The 2002 Zinfandel earned **89 Points** from *Wine Enthusiast* magazine as well as **4 Silver Medals** from various wine competitions across the country. Deep reddish black in color, the wine first gives the impressions of raspberry, black cherry, blueberry and red apple with mild berry notes and spicy floral aromas of black pepper and fresh rose petals. The Zinfandel's full-bodied structure is supple and silky with a jammy intensity on the palate, blending flavors of cherries and cranberries. The complexity of the rose petals, spices and sweet vanilla round out the wine and lead into a flavorful finish with intensified, lingering fruit nuances. Try pairing the Ballentine 2002 Old Vines Zinfandel with grilled steak, lamb, and lasagna. 83% Zinfandel, 10% Syrah, 7% Petit Syrah. Aged 14 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2012.



2002 VINTAGE:

89 POINTS – *WINE ENTHUSIAST* MAGAZINE, **SILVER MEDAL** – *PACIFIC RIM INTERNATIONAL WINE COMPETITION*; **SILVER MEDAL** – *SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE WINE COMPETITION*, **SILVER MEDAL** – *WEST COAST WINE COMPETITION*, **SILVER MEDAL** – *HOUSTON CHRONICLE WINE COMPETITION*

LEGACY: PREVIOUS VINTAGES EARNED

DISTINGUISHED RECOGNITION INCLUDING A 9/10 SCORE FROM THE ZAP FESTIVAL, SILVER MEDALS

Just the facts:

pH.....	3.63
Alcohol.....	14.7%
Total Acid.....	0.59 g/100 mls
Aged in Oak.....	14 months
Drink Now or Up to Year.....	2012



BALLENTINE VINEYARDS

While Ballentine Vineyards' Winery only dates back to 1992, it can be reasonably argued that the winery's roots can be traced back more than a hundred years. Ballentine's owners, Betty and Van Ballentine, are both descendents of Napa Valley pioneering wine families that had a hand in carving the reputation that Napa Valley has enjoyed for centuries.

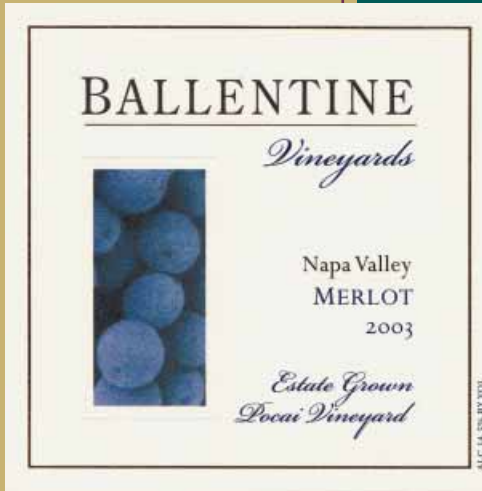
Betty's grandfather, Libero Pocai, emigrated from Italy and found his way to Napa Valley in 1906, when he purchased a sixty-acre tract that eventually became the State's 115th bonded winery. Under the L. Pocai & Sons label, the winery reached its heyday during the 1940s and 50s. Van Ballentine's father, John Ballentine, was one of the first vintners to apply for a new winery bond after Prohibition was repealed in 1933. He called his new winery Deer Park and became commercially successful selling a large number of varietals that were popular at the time.

Van Ballentine started working for his family's winery as a youth and continued as a grower after Deer Park ceased operations around 1960. Through it all, he maintained a desire to return to the winery side of the wine business.

2003 VINTAGE:

GOLD MEDAL WINE CLUB SPECIAL SELECTION

LEGACY: PREVIOUS VINTAGES OF BALLENTINE MERLOTS ARE GOLD MEDAL WINNERS AND RECIPIENTS OF 90-92 POINT SCORES FROM PROMINENT WINE INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS.



A Gold Medal Wine Club Special Selection, the Ballentine Vineyards 2003 Merlot was produced from Napa Valley's legendary Pocai Vineyard, which dates back to 1906. This historical vineyard site is found on the west side of the Silverado trail near Calistoga and has produced countless award winning wines since its inception. The 2003 Merlot is right on the heels of its 92 Point scoring predecessor, as enthusiasts eagerly anticipate its forthcoming accolades. Ballentine's Merlot is brilliant reddish garnet in color, with initial aromas of black cherry, currants, black tea, raspberries, herbs, and spices. Red apples come into focus next, with a background of pepper, vanilla, and earthy toasted notes, which are characteristic of Napa Valley Merlots. On the palate, this wine exudes flavors of red and black cherries, blueberries, pepper, vanilla and spices, while the mouth feel is fluid and full throughout with a silky sweet fruit nature. Well-structured tannins extend through the finish with a balanced acidity and warming notes that lead into flavors of fresh berries and vanilla caramel toastiness. Try pairing the Ballentine 2003 Merlot with Spaghetti Bolognese, Beef Stroganoff, and lamb stew. 87% Merlot, 11% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Cabernet Franc. Aged 16 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2014.

Just the facts:

pH	3.51
Alcohol	14.8%
Total Acid	0.64 g/100 mls
Aged in Oak	16 months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2014

In 1992, Ballentine decided to revive Ballentine Vineyards and had a portion of his harvest custom crushed. In 1995, Van and Betty built a winery, behind their 100-year-old farmhouse. They revived the original bonded winery number #3595 issued to Van's father in 1933.

Today's Ballentine Vineyards is a modest 10,000 case winery that produces excellent estate wines that are only sold in select, premium shops outside the winery. Ballentine Vineyards has won numerous medals and awards in competitions and is considered one of the rock-solid small wineries that are the true bases of the Napa Valley.

"I always had the desire to get back into the winery business," Van Ballentine explained. "Wine was in my veins since I was a little boy who was used to clean the inside of the tanks. For many years we sold our grapes to the likes of Caymus, Ravenswood, Rosenblum and Robert Mondavi, but I always felt there was more to the business than just growing grapes and tending vines. I also felt all along that I had the true passion for the winery side of the business. It's a hard business, and you had better come prepared to work if you



Ballentine Vineyards produces 100% estate grown fruit from three distinct Napa Valley vineyards.

expect to be successful.”

At this time, Ballentine Vineyards consists of more than 100 acres of prime Napa Valley vineyards. The land is divided into three separate



Owner Van Ballentine overlooks his hand-harvested Zinfandel grapes with Winemaker Bruce Devlin.

vineyard tracts. The long-standing Poca Ranch reaches between the Napa River and Silverado Trail and was part of Betty's family's original vineyard land bought by her grandfather more than a century ago. The well-known Crystal Springs

Davis. The young winemaker, Bruce Devlin of nearby San Jose, stayed on and is now the full-time winemaker for Ballentine Vineyards.

“We pretty much agree on most things,” added Van Ballentine plainly. “Bruce does a really great job and his winemaking approach is basically a continuation of the same style we originally developed for our wines.”


Betty Ballentine continues to operate the business side of the winery. Van confided that he “hopes she’s never gonna quit,” and finished the statement with a chuckle.

After dealing almost exclusively with red varieties, Ballentine Vineyards has recently entered the white wine side of the business, an area of expertise that Van Ballentine cedes to Bruce Devlin. Chenin Blanc is already being produced and a new Malvasia Bianca will debut later this year.

The biggest project currently underway at Ballentine Vineyards is the remodeling of the tasting facility

that will greatly expand the visitor capability of the winery. The extensive remodeling is designed to enlarge the facility “as much as possible,” according to Ballentine. It is

scheduled to be completed sometime next Spring, but an exact date has not yet been established.

In many ways, Ballentine Vineyards and its owners are the continuation of the Napa Valley wine tradition, producing high caliber wines in the shadow of their higher profile neighbors. 



- 1) How many wineries are located in Napa Valley?
- 2) What was the significance of the “Judgment of Paris?”
- 3) How long do grapevines live?

See Page 7 for Answers.

About The Winemaker

Like many other preeminent Napa Valley winemakers, Bruce Devlin is a graduate of UC Davis. He also has worked for wineries in South Africa, Germany and Australia before returning to California. In South Africa, he became familiar with the venerable Chenin Blanc grape and now considers it his signature grape and wine. He has also consulted for a number of other Napa Valley wineries.

“It’s a hard business, and you had better come prepared to work if you expect to be successful.”

— Van Ballentine

Vineyard at the base of storied Howell Mountain is the source of much impeccable fruit and the simply named Home Vineyard surrounds the present Ballentine Vineyards Winery as well as the Ballentine’s residence that are both located on the property.

Almost ten years ago, Ballentine hired an apprentice winemaker that had just returned to the United States and who had graduated from UC





Van Ballentine

One might think that at age 81, Van Ballentine would begin to slow down a bit. Happily, this is not the case with the laid back owner of Ballentine Vineyards.

“I can’t really remember being interested in anything else since I was a child,” Ballentine recalled in a recent interview. “My father was dedicated to the wine business and I guess it just rubbed off on me.”

For the record, Van Ballentine has recently completed his 64th consecutive harvest, a number that puts him in rarified air amongst Napa Valley growers and vintners. While he admits to slowing down a bit, he remains a formidable outside force when his prized vineyards are picked each year.

His wife of many decades, Betty, herself a descendent of an original Napa Valley pioneering winery family, tells it this way: “No one in Napa Valley tends to their vineyards like Van does,” she said proudly. “And what’s really more important is the fact that he really enjoys doing it. He says it’s something that is in his blood and anyone who knows him knows it is true.”

Van recalls that he was either seven or eight when he began helping his dad around the winery. At first he simply followed his father helping wherever he could. Then, his small statue was put to good use when he was able to fit through the small opening that allowed him to clean the inside of the empty tanks.

As with most Napa Valley wine families, the Ballentines have had their share of ups and downs. Van remembers times in the valley during the 1950s when money wasn’t very available and a really good bottle of wine could be bought for under a dollar.

Van’s career included a stint as the vineyard manager for the huge Christian Brothers facility just north of the town

THE WINE REGION




All of Ballentine’s estate grown grapes come from two of Napa Valley’s most prestigious appellations, St. Helena and Calistoga. Both are located in what is considered the upper valley, at Napa’s northern end. The three separate vineyards that comprise Ballentine’s estates provide an excellent cross section of micro-climatization that is important to the style of wines that Ballentine Vineyards continues to produce.

The two sub regions (St. Helena and Calistoga) contain both mountainous and flat (valley) vineyards and are considered among the elite growing areas in Northern California. They occupy the eastern slopes of the Mayacamas



The Mediterranean climate and extraordinary diversity of appellations and wine styles contribute to the region’s distinguished worldwide success.

Ridge and are subject to the same cool nights and sun-filled days that the rest of Napa Valley enjoys. Red varietals dominate the plantings but an occasional white vineyard can be found in selected spots. Many of Napa Valley’s finest wines originate in this region that is held in the highest worldwide regard. 



Lamb Rack Merlot

Blue Cheese Crusted Filet Mignon Steaks

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Pair with Ballentine 2003 Merlot — Serves 3-4

Ingredients:

4 Double-thick, large Loin Lamb Chops, split
1/4 Teaspoon Salt
1/4 Teaspoon Pepper
1/4 Teaspoon Paprika
3 Tablespoons Soy Sauce
1/2 Cup Merlot
1/4 Teaspoon Dry Mustard
1/8 Teaspoon Garlic Powder
1/3 Cup Water
8 Large Button Mushrooms, peeled

Preparation:

Trim all excess fat from lamb chops. Season with salt, pepper and paprika. Thread lamb chops on long skewer to resemble rack of lamb and place in shallow baking dish. Bake in moderate oven 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 1/2 hour. Pour off melted fat. Mix soy sauce, wine, mustard and garlic powder; pour over chops, coating well. Bake 1/2 hour longer, basting two or three times. Add water and mushrooms and bake 15 minutes more. Cooked whole baby carrots, peas and tiny crooked new potatoes may be added

Pair with Ballentine 2002 Zinfandel — Serves 4

Ingredients:

4 Tablespoons Butter
3 Garlic Cloves, chopped
2 Medium Shallots, chopped
1 Tablespoon fresh Thyme, chopped
1 cup Beef Broth
1/2 cup Zinfandel
4 Filet Mignon steaks
1/2 Cup crumbled Blue Cheese (approximately 2 ounces)
1/4 Cup Breadcrumbs
1 Tablespoon fresh Parsley, chopped

Preparation:

Over medium-high heat, melt 1 tablespoon butter in heavy skillet. Add garlic, shallots, and thyme and sauté until all is tender, approximately 5 minutes. Add the broth and wine. Boil until sauce is reduced to about 1/2 cup. Set the sauce aside. Blend cheese, bread crumbs and parsley in bowl to coat cheese with bread crumbs. Preheat broiler. Over medium-high heat, melt 2 tablespoons butter. Sprinkle steaks with salt and pepper. Add steaks to skillet and cook to desired doneness. Transfer steaks to baking sheet. Press cheese mixture on top of steaks. Broil until cheese browns. Transfer steaks to plates. Pour sauce into skillet and bring to a boil for 2 minutes. Add remaining butter, season and spoon sauce around steaks to serve.

Results

2005 Perry Creek Syrah

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
93%	6%	1%

2006 Perry Creek Zinfandel

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
94%	5%	1%

2003 Niner Cabernet Sauvignon

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
95%	3%	2%

2006 Niner Sauvignon Blanc

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
94	4%	2%

The above wines were recently featured. To see our current inventory and reorder online, visit us at: www.goldmedalwine.com/member. Click on Judge The Wines and submit your own wine ratings to be entered into our monthly drawing to win a 1/2 case of Gold Series wines.

Van Ballentine

Spotlight, continued from page 5

of St. Helena, a period that Van described as “eye opening to see wines made on such a large scale. It sort of made me appreciate the fact that as a small winemaker you tend to have a great deal more flexibility in making decisions about your wines.”

Van Ballentine is also proud of his no-nonsense approach to wines. He pleaded his cause with a direct approach to the business.

“I just want to make something that is good to drink. I place a good deal of emphasis on the fruit content and have stayed away from over-oaking the finish. Betty and I have done a huge number of public tastings and from the feedback I get from many consumers, the type of wines I make actually taste better to many of them. After all, the idea is when you drink one of my bottles I want you to want another right away. In the end, isn't that what it's all about?”

At an age when many of his peers have retired and taken a seat on the sidelines, Van Ballentine continues to perform on the playing field that is the wine industry. His wines are as subtle as his personality and are among the true values of the Napa Valley. The wines of Ballentine Vineyards reflect a period of times past in Northern California and of an era that allowed Napa Valley to emerge as one of the great wine producing regions in the entire world. Happily, Van Ballentine was around during those times and reflects it well with his lovely wines. 🍇



1) Increasing in number all the time, currently there are over 300 wineries that call Napa Valley home, making this the most densely concentrated wine region in the world. Napa Valley's ideal Mediterranean climate and skilled winemakers contribute to its popularity and the worldwide success of its wines.

2) The Judgment of Paris was a wine competition organized in Paris on May 24, 1976 in which French judges did blind tastings of top-quality wines from France and California. California wines from Napa Valley rated best in each category, which caused a huge surprise as France was generally regarded as being the foremost producer of the world's best wines. This public victory for Napa Valley wineries brought overnight success to California's wine industry.

3) Under optimum conditions, grapevines can survive for hundreds of years. The oldest known grapevine in the world is more than 400 years old and is located in Yarra, Slovenia. Each year, up to 100 bottles of this red varietal (Modra Kavcina) are produced from this single vine!

THE ART OF FINE WINE



The Luncheon of the Boating Party was painted by Pierre Auguste Renoir in 1881. It depicts a group of his friends enjoying wine on the balcony of his favorite French restaurant, Maison Fournaise.

THE GRAPEVINE

“A superb Zinfandel. One of the best we’ve sampled through the club.

Thanks! [Perry Creek 2006 Zinfandel]”

– Reed Smith

“OH WOW! Enough Said! [Perry Creek 2005 Syrah]”

– Robert Gilburg

“Absolutely wonderful from the first sip!” [Perry Creek 2006 Zinfandel]

– Diana Ford

Uncork some of the finest ultra-premium

Pinots in our NEW *Pinot Noir Series*. With the first delivery recently landing in the eager hands of the Series’ new members, we’re excited to announce the Series is a huge hit! Every other month, *Pinot Noir Series* members receive two different bottles of incredible, limited production Pinots, all highly regarded and worthy of your attention. The hand-selected featured wines are from top California winemakers and artisan International wineries. As part of the delivery, find informative color publications with details on the featured wines, tasting notes, and a history of the winery to make wine tasting a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience. Don’t miss out on the next delivery — Call us at 1-800-266-8888 or visit www.GoldMedalWine.com/PinotSeries to sign up today!

This Month’s Special

Don’t forget to place your holiday champagne orders! This season’s special California champagne selection is Laetita Vineyard and Winery’s Brut Cuvée, and it’s going quickly. Irresistible, celebratory, and the recipient of **90 Points** from *Wine News* and **4 Gold Medals**, the Brut Cuvée is the perfect choice for holiday celebrations, office parties, or any special occasion. Visit www.GoldMedalWine.com/sparkle and save up to 27% while available.

The *Gold Series* features wines from only the best small wineries of California. The selected wines have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by respected national wine publications. On occasion we feature a wine of high medal-quality with very limited availability that may not be submitted to these venues for review.



THE GOLD MEDAL WINE STORE *Reorders*

Since the revival of the Ballentine brand in 1992, this historical winery’s impressive releases have garnered critical acclaim from several national wine industry publications. The 2002 Zinfandel and 2003 Merlot each maintain an exceptional sense of varietal focus and capture the essence of some of the valley’s oldest vineyards. Both wines are Sold Out directly from the winery, so make sure to secure a case or two today!

**Save up to 35%
off Winery Direct**

BALLENTINE VINEYARDS	Retail Price Winery-Direct	Club Price 2-Bottle Members	Club Price 4-Bottle Members And Multiple Series Members
2002 Zinfandel*	Half Case-6 \$120	\$90 (\$15.00) Save 25%	\$84 (\$14.00) Save 30%
	Full Case-12 \$240	\$169 (\$14.00) Save 30%	\$156 (\$13.00) Save 35%
2003 Merlot*	Half Case-6 \$144	\$108 (\$18.00) Save 25%	\$101 (\$16.83) Save 30%
	Full Case-12 \$288	\$202 (\$16.83) Save 30%	\$187 (\$15.58) Save 35%

Reorder Online: www.goldmedalwine.com/member

Toll Free: 1-800-266-8888 Fax: 1-800-266-8889

Gold Medal Wine Club – 5330 Debbie Road, Suite 200 • Santa Barbara, California 93111

*Availability is extremely limited Note: Shipping and tax (if applicable) not included in the above prices. Call for details.

New You May Be Eligible for **DEEPER DISCOUNTS!**
If you are also a member of the Platinum, Pinot Noir, International, or Diamond Series, you are now eligible to receive **DEEPER DISCOUNTS** when you reorder your favorite wines!