

THE WINE PRESS

Gold Medal Wine Club Newsletter: Vol. 17 No. 11

Van Ruiten Family Winery Edition

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"With Gold Medal Wine Club,
The Road to Great Wine
Begins at Your Door."

www.goldmedalwine.com

VAN RUITEN FAMILY—A WINNING TEAM SPANNING OVER FIFTY YEARS AND THREE GENERATIONS

While a large number of California wineries can trace their existence to their ancestor's immigration to this country at the beginning of the 20th Century, the Lodi-based Van Ruiten Family Winery is a more recent story.

The Van Ruiten (correctly pronounced *van root-en*) saga actually took place immediately following the Second World War. Family patriarch

John Van Ruiten was a native of tiny Spaarnwoude in Holland where he labored in his family's dairy business. Wartime Holland was a most difficult environment and John Van Ruiten survived due to his business acumen and ability to provide certain needed services (including moonshine) whenever the occasion arose.

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Located on West Highway 12 near Lodi, California, the impressive tasting room is the latest addition to the Van Ruiten Family Winery.

Gold Medal Wine Club features two wines each month from only the best small wineries of California. Featured wines include those which have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by a respected national wine publication. On occasion we feature a wine which is of high medal-quality, but due to its very limited availability or by preference of the wine producer, may not be submitted to these venues for review. Each and every selection is a superb wine made in small quantities and with limited distribution. There are over 2,000 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



2002 RESERVE SYRAH

Located between Napa Valley and the Sierra Foothills, the Lodi Appellation is highly recognized for exceptional fruit and quickly is becoming equally recognized for the wines produced in the region. The 2002 Estate Syrah is a sensational illustration of the fruit grown in Lodi Appellation under the watchful eyes of the Van Ruitens. Combined the talents of winemaker Ryan Leeman, the 2002 Estate Syrah received a distinguished **Gold Medal** at the *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition* plus four more **Silver Medals** in national wine competitions. **Silver Medal** — *California State Fair Wine Competition*, **Silver Medal** — *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition*, **Silver Medal** — *Indiana State Fair Wine competition* and a **Silver Medal** — *Tasters Guild International Wine Competition*. Wonderful aromas of strawberry jam, walnuts, chocolate, and molasses with rich flavors of blackberry, raspberry, and cherry culminate in a lengthy tannic finish. Pair with hearty winter soups, full-flavored fish entrees and pastas. Aged in oak 24 months. 75.3% Syrah, 24.7% Cabernet Sauvignon. Enjoy now until 2010.

2004 OLD VINE ZINFANDEL

The Van Ruiten 2004 Old Vine Estate Zinfandel spent an unusually lengthy 24 months in oak to mature prior to bottling. This delectable wine won a **Gold Medal** at the *California State Fair Wine Competition* and immediately sold out at the winery before the wine was entered into any other competitions. (Note: Previous vintages, won Best of Show and numerous Double Gold and Gold Medals). The grapes for the 2004 Old Vine Zinfandel were hand-selected from the first vineyard John Van Ruiten Sr. planted in 1952. The grapes are sorted a second time before going into the fermentation tanks. This allows only the best fruit to go into the estate wine. The full bodied 2004 Old Vine Zinfandel is packed full of blackberry, cherry, and blueberry jam with barrel flavors contributing aromas of coffee, cedar, clove with licorice anise. The well balanced age worthy tannins carry throughout the lengthy finish. Pair this powerful Zinfandel with lamb, hearty stew, venison, and even your favorite steak. 78% Zinfandel, 14% Petite Sirah, 7% Petit Verdot 1% Syrah. Enjoy now until 2012

WINE CREDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

2002 VINTAGE:

Gold Medal — *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition*,
Silver Medal — *California State Fair Wine Competition*,
Silver Medal — *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition*,
Silver Medal — *Indiana State Fair Wine Competition*,
Silver Medal — *Tasters Guild International Wine Competition*.

LEGACY: The estate Syrah is a result of the Van Ruitens belief that hard work and an uncompromising commitment to top quality grapes are the cornerstones of their business.

Just the facts:

pH.....	3.47
Alcohol.....	14.5%
Total Acid.....	0.67 g/100 mls
Aged in Oak.....	24 months
Cases Produced.....	3,240
Drink Now or Up to Year.....	2010

2004 VINTAGE:

Gold Medal — *California State Fair Wine Competition*.

LEGACY: This wine holds the distinction of being from the first vines planted by John Van Ruiten Sr. in 1952 and is produced from the family's most prized grapes and consistent Gold Medal winner.

Just the facts:

pH.....	3.63
Alcohol.....	14.5%
Total Acid.....	0.60 g/100 mls
Aged in Oak.....	24 months
Cases Produced.....	3,000
Drink Now or Up to Year.....	2012

GOLD MEDAL SPOTLIGHT

The Van Ruiten Family

The fact that Van Ruiten brothers Jim, 48, and John Jr., 47, share this month's spotlight status comes as no big deal to the pair. In fact, the two would prefer that such matters would always be handled in such a manner.

"For us," offered Jim Van Ruiten in a recent interview, "it's all about family and the way we approach this business. John Jr. and I each have different areas of responsibility, but we see to it that we each compliment the other as much as possible. In fact, that's the way it is with our entire family."

Jim and John Jr. co-manage the Van Ruiten Family's extensive grape growing business.

"My brother and I have a great relationship," Van Ruiten went on. "I feel we utilize each other's strengths nicely. John Jr. is meticulous in his approach to growing and it shows each up each vintage year when our wines get even better with each new bottling."

But Van Ruiten admits that this propensity for the wine business didn't come easily to the close-knit pair.

"When we were younger," he added, "all we knew about was the dairy business. We would get up early before school and do our chores and then would continue them when we got home from school. This went on seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. When Dad started talking about the grape business, we were very supportive, even though we were still both very young. We both knew it had to be easier than the dairy business; anything we did would have been easier than tending cows all the time."

Jim Van Ruiten feels that his family's entry into the winery business was the smartest move that the family could make. He also feels

that the Van Ruiten Family Winery's greatest days are still ahead.

"It is important to remember that we are still first and foremost grape growers," he explained. "Growing quality grapes is what gave us the opportunity to expand and build the winery. When we noted the incredible success other wineries were having utilizing our grapes, we just felt we should take the chance and see what we could do on our own. Dad taught us that everything important was 'in the dirt' and when our fruit comes in each year it brings a smile to practically everyone's face. That's when we know that everything is going well."

Van Ruiten also feels that Lodi's central location between the Bay Area and California's Sierra Nevada Mountains on Highway 12 is a boon

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"As a family we explore new opportunities nurture those that can make a difference, and pass along knowledge gained from one generation to the next." – John Van Ruiten Sr.



WINE WIZARD

- 1) How many calories are in a glass of wine?
- 2) How many carbohydrates are in a glass of wine?
- 3) How long will an open of wine bottle keep?

Continued from page 1

When the father of his future wife (Ann) returned from the United States after the war, John listened to the tales of potential prosperity and decided to make the move. In 1948, John landed in the Central Valley crossroads of Lodi and began operating a business he knew well—

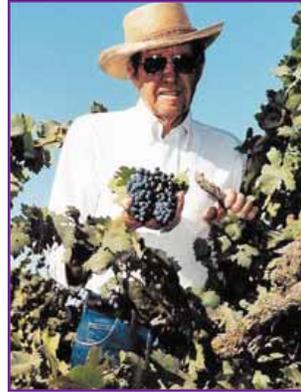
a full service dairy.

“When I came to Lodi,” recalled John Van Ruiten, Sr., “I simply fell in love with the place. I appreciated the climate, the soils and most importantly, the wonderful reception of the people here.”

With the help of loans from the local bank, John’s business flourished. He soon opened several convenience-style drive-through dairy stops where milk and juices were the main items of fare. In the meantime, Ann’s family had also immigrated to California and the two were soon married.

A decade later, John Van Ruiten, Sr. became fascinated with another California agricultural phenomena, the seemingly prestigious grape growing business. Local farmers were reporting increasing demand for their high quality grapes and the rigors of a full service dairy farm

were beginning to wane on John Van Ruiten. John made a sharp-eyed purchase of an Old Zinfandel Vineyard. With a large amount of sweat equity he planted additional Zinfandel vines and began growing grapes in the Lodi Appellation.



John Van Ruiten, Sr. takes great pride in the fruit from the family vineyards.

Before long, a number of local wineries and also “over the hill” wineries (those located in the Central Coast and Napa/Sonoma) were also beginning to seek some of the prized Van Ruiten grapes for their varied production.

“It seemed the natural thing to do,” related John Van

Ruiten, Sr., today a sprightly 84 and still active in the everyday business of his winery. “All around us people were planting grapes and beginning to make a lot of money doing it. I thought I saw an almost unlimited potential and thought I should take advantage of the situation. With the time and effort required of the dairy business, growing grapes seemed like an incredibly uplifting business to me.”

For the next thirty years, Van Ruiten’s grapes were considered among the finest grapes in the Central Valley. The Van Ruiten produce was sold to an increasing number of smaller, more boutique-styled wineries. When the wines that were produced from these grapes began to take serious medals in upscale competitions, the Van Ruiten Family began to take notice.

“When our grape prices began to exceed \$1,000 a ton and the demand kept increasing, I felt I had the chance to develop another revenue source,” Van Ruiten explained. “It was either



It’s not unusual to be standing room only in the Van Ruiten tasting room.

1995 or 1996, and the wine business was exploding everywhere in California. I talked it over with my family and everyone decided it was time to take some of the profits we had made from growing grapes and put them into a winery.”

After spending several years deciding on just the right combination of factors, ground was broken on a two-acre tract for a new state-of-the-art winery. The first Van Ruiten Family Winery release came in 1999 as a product of some of Van Ruiten’s top fruit that was custom crushed at another winery. The initial release of between 7 and 8 thousand cases has been increased to the company’s present level of around 20,000 cases, or about forty per cent of the winery’s capacity.

John Van Ruiten can take great pride in the accomplishment of his young winery that is collecting accolades of its own in major wine competitions. Throughout it all, Van Ruiten has remained steadfast in the work ethic that he brought with him from his native Holland.

His business acumen and his persistent work habits have rubbed off on his entire family and, equally importantly, his wonderful family of wines.

It is a great pleasure for us to be able to share the Van Ruiten Family Winery *Gold Series* selections with you. 



Award-winning winemaker, Ryan K. Leeman joined the Van Ruiten Family Winery in 2003

ANSWERS TO WINE WIZARD

1) The exact calorie count in wine a glass of wine depends on both the alcohol and sugar content. A sweet, high alcohol, Port wine has a much higher calorie count than a dry table wine. In a 5 ounce glass of dry red or white table wine it is likely to have 100 to 125 calories, or approximately 20 calories per ounce, while rich dessert wines and Ports could go up to 150 calories or more for a smaller 3-ounce glass or 50 calories per ounce.

2) Wine contains no fat and no protein; just about its entire calorie content is in the form of alcohol, which is metabolized much like a carbohydrate. The carbohydrate count in wines varies substantially, depending on their alcoholic content and the amount of residual sugar. A 5-ounce glass of dry white table wine may have 1.0 to 1.25 grams of carbohydrates, while a similar portion of red may go up to 2.5 grams. Sweet wines and Port wines with high sugar content and high alcohol will have up to 16 grams of carbohydrates in a 5-ounce serving.

3) A half-finished bottle of wine with the cork replaced will hold at room temperature for a day or two before its flavor starts to deteriorate. If you store the re-corked open bottle of wine in your refrigerator, it might last for a week or more. Even if your wine gets too old to enjoy, it can’t hurt you. It may lose its flavor and become flat, dull, and unenjoyable, but it will not turn harmful or toxic. Your best bet is simply to finish your wine within a couple of days, use it for cooking, or, better yet, invite friends over to share the wine over dinner when you first open the bottle.





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

VAN RUITEN LAMB RAGOUT

Pair with 2004 Old Vine Zinfandel

Serves 4

The sauce's flavor is more Middle Eastern than Italian in flavor. The sweetness of the roasted peppers, mint, cinnamon, and allspice intensify the juiciness of the wine. You can serve the sauce over regular pasta, but the dish is best when made with whole-wheat penne pasta or buckwheat, if you can find it.

2 Red Bell Peppers	1 Tablespoon Olive Oil
1 Onion, finely chopped	2 Garlic cloves, minced
1 Pound ground Lamb	1/2 Cup Zinfandel
1 Teaspoon ground Cinnamon	1/8 Teaspoon ground Allspice
12 ounces Penne Pasta	1/4 cup Mint leaf, fresh chopped
Salt and Pepper to taste	
1 Can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes with juices	

Roast the peppers over a gas flame or under a broiler until blackened on all sides. Transfer to a bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand 10 minutes. Peel, seed and de-rib the peppers. Transfer to a food processor and puree.

Heat the oil in a large, heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and stir 2 minutes. Add the lamb and cook until no pink remains, breaking up the lamb into small pieces as it cooks. Drain any fat from the saucepan.

Add the wine and bring to a boil. Cook until only a few tablespoons of liquid remain. Add the pepper puree, tomatoes with juices, cinnamon, and allspice. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Partially cover the pan and simmer 30 minutes to blend the flavors, stirring frequently. Uncover the pot and simmer until very thick, stirring frequently, about 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep hot.

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water until al dente. Drain. Transfer the pasta to a large pasta bowl. Top with sauce. Sprinkle with chopped mint leaves and serve.

GRILLED FALL MAPLE GLAZED TURKEY BREAST

Pair with Van Ruiten Estate Syrah

Serves 6

1 Turkey breast, bone-in, thawed, 4 to 5 lb.
3 Tablespoons Butter
1/2 Large Red Onion, chopped fine
1/2 Cup Breadcrumbs, dry seasoned
1/2 Tablespoon of Sea Salt
1/4 Tablespoon Pepper, fresh ground
2 Tablespoons Maple syrup
2 Tablespoons Cider vinegar
2 Tablespoons Thyme, fresh, chopped
1 Large Apple, peeled, cored and finely chopped (tart apples are best)

Coat your grilling rack with nonstick cooking spray. Place a large pan under grilling rack away from heat source. Preheat the grill to medium utilizing indirect heat (heat 1 burner of gas grill to medium, or arrange hot charcoal around outside of grill, leaving center open).

Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in medium skillet over medium heat. Add onion, apple and thyme; cook and stir 5 minutes or until onion is tender crisp. Stir in breadcrumbs, salt, and pepper.

Gently loosen skin of turkey breast, but do not remove. Spoon the onion mixture between meat and skin, cover evenly; replace skin. Place turkey on grill above drip pan. Grill turkey, covered, 1 hour. Use a grill screen if desired.

Melt the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter; blend in maple syrup and vinegar. Baste turkey breast with mixture, grilling 30 to 40 minutes more or until internal temperature of thickest part of thigh reaches 170 degrees. Carefully remove from grill. Let stand uncovered for 15 minutes before carving. Serve with winter vegetables and mashed potatoes.

Continued from page 5

to the exposure and practicability that any delta winery needs to succeed. The winery's impressive tasting room does a remarkable business and keeps many members of the family engaged in the operation.

With plans to increase the Van Ruiten Family Winery's production to around the fifty thousand case

level sometime around 2010, such exposure and financial security are important ingredients.

Both Jim and John Jr. are also excited about their own family's participation in the eventual growth of the family's business. John and Anne's children (Coby, Mary, Angie, James, John Jr., Theresa, Jackie) and now the extended Van

Ruiten family believe that hard work and an uncompromising commitment to excellence is the cornerstone of success today and for their 16 grandchildren and the generations to come.

"We are an incredibly close family," Jim Van Ruiten concluded, "and we all like it that way. For some reason, we seem to accomplish

JUDGE-THE-WINES RESULTS

In this section we publish the cumulative, on-going tallies of the Judge-the-Wines Scorecards which are provided in each delivery of wine and mailed back in by Club members. We believe it is fun as well as educational to think about and record the different characteristics of the wines you sample. No matter how acute you think your palate is, the person next to you will probably have a different thought or opinion about a certain characteristic of the wine you are sampling. It can also prove beneficial to record your impressions of the wine for reference at a later date.

Below are the most recent tallies of the Scorecards returned. Gold Medal Wine Club specializes in featuring small-sized wineries and small-production wines. Depending on availability from the winery, all members may not receive every wine that is listed below. The Scorecard results which are printed in green indicate the wine selections that as of press time are still available for reorder.

2005 Belvedere Chardonnay

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	92%	6%	2%

2005 LedgeWood Creek Chardonnay

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	6%	4%

2006 White Oak Sauvignon Blanc

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	6%	4%

2006 San Simeon Pinot Gris

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	89%	6%	5%

2004 Bradford Mtn. Zinfandel

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	94%	5%	1%

2004 LedgeWood Creek GSM

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	91%	6%	3%

2005 White Oak Merlot

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	5%	5%

2001 San Simeon Opaque Red

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	92%	5%	3%

The above wines were recently featured. Due to space limitations, the entire list of available wines is not listed.

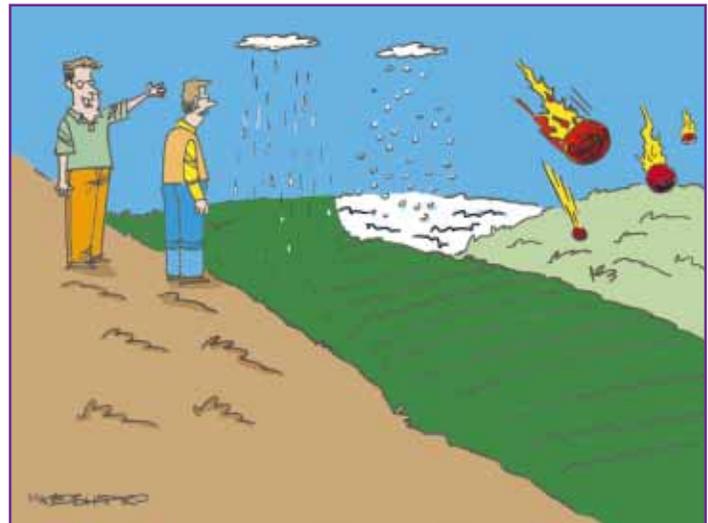
To see our entire inventory and reorder online, go to: www.goldmedalwine.com/member

■ Indicates wine is still available

more when everyone gets along. It's been that way since our Dad first came to California. I guess some of his work habits rubbed off on us."

Such humbleness is also a part of the Van Ruiten tradition that seems destined for additional plaudits and accolades. It is quite refreshing to imagine that it exists within the confines of the often-spirited competition of the modern California wine industry.

We are betting that people like Jim and John Van Ruiten Jr., and their families are around for a long, long time. After all, their wines speak for themselves. 



"As you know, each valley has its distinctive weather patterns and Terroir."

©Mike Shapiro

THE GRAPEVINE

Comments from us and Club members

We've been so busy relaying news in this section during the last several editions that we have short changed printing member comments that are sent back to us via the *Judge-The-Wines* scorecards. We believe that it is educational as well as fun to identify the elements and characteristics of the wines you are tasting. We ask you to fill out and mail in your *Judge-The-Wines* scorecard included in your packet, or rate the wines on-line at www.goldmedalwine.com/member/scorecard for a reason. We want to know what you think of the wines and our service. If your comment is picked for publication we'll send you a wine-related gift as our *thank you!*

"I loved this wine [Inheritance 2002 Syrah]! A friend of mine invited me to a wine-tasting event. We were told to bring our favorite bottle of wine. I brought the Inheritance. I also didn't know we would be scoring the wines as we tasted. I actually won 1st place! This wine got the highest score out of about 25 red/white wines. It was a wonderful way to meet new people and tell them about the Gold Medal Wine Club!!! I was so tickled!"
—Jennifer Berry, Score 48

"[Ledgewood Creek 2005 GSM] was everything your promo information indicated . . . great with grilled burger!"
—Kenneth Smith, Score 48

"Held a small party to sample this month's selection (our first) e3 compare with our favorites. [White Oak 2005 Merlot] won hands down even from our most knowledgeable and experienced wine snob."
—Dorothy Henn, Score 50

"I just ordered a case of [San Simeon 2005 Opaque]!!!"
—Dianna Ford, Score 55

"[Clos LaChance 2005 Chardonnay] is silky and smooth, with a lovely after-taste. We have been members for many years and always enjoy sharing our wine with friends who appreciate the quality you provide."
—Rose Van Hailoma, Score 51

Members who send in their wine ratings on the provided Scorecards are eligible to receive a bonus half-case of any *Gold Medal Series* wine that is in stock if your name is drawn. Drawings are held each month. (Maximum of one Scorecard per wine per membership)...GMWC

R E O R D E R

After five decades of farming their wine grapes for other wineries to use, the Van Ruitens decided to set aside the best grapes grown on their 1000 acre property and produce wines under their own family name. The result? Nothing but a bin full of Gold Medals. Don't wait too long to open and serve these wines as we expect a quick sell-out.

VAN RUITEN WINERY	Retail Price Winery-Direct	Club Price 2-Bottle Members	Club Price 4-Bottle Members
2002 Reserve Syrah* Lodi Appellation	Half Case-6 \$96 Full Case-12 \$192	\$75 (\$12.50) Save 22% \$139 (\$11.58) Save 28%	\$68 (\$11.33) Save 29% \$125 (\$10.42) Save 35%
2004 Old Vine Zinfandel* Lodi Appellation	Half Case-6 \$120 Full Case-12 \$240	\$89 (\$14.83) Save 26% \$165 (\$13.75) Save 31%	\$79 (\$13.17) Save 34% \$144 (\$12.00) Save 40%

Reorder Hotline: 1-800-266-8888 • www.goldmedalwine.com/member

Reorder Faxline: 1-800-266-8889

*Availability is extremely limited.

Note: Shipping and tax (if applicable) not included in the above prices. Call for details.