



# The Wine Press

Medal Winning Wines from California's Best Family-Owned Wineries.

Vino Valpredo Wine Company  
Sonoma County, California





## VINO VALPREDO 2013 PINOT NOIR RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

500 Cases Produced

Of the seventeen AVA's in Sonoma County, the Russian River Valley is one that is especially known for producing outstanding Pinot Noir. The cool climate and regular intrusion of the oceanic fog allows Pinot Noir grapes to develop full flavor maturity over a long, extended growing season. Vino Valpredo's 2013 Pinot Noir is deeply hued with bright aromas of cherry and red plum that delight the senses. Its satiny mouthfeel has a beautiful balance between acidity and soft, elegant tannins that linger on the finish. Notes of pomegranate, cherry cola and savory cloves and baking spices make this an irresistible wine. Aged 10 months in oak. 100% Pinot Noir. Enjoy now until 2021.

**GOLD MEDAL SPECIAL SELECTION**

## VINO VALPREDO 2012 MERLOT SONOMA COUNTY

275 Cases Produced

Sonoma County Merlots can range in structure from soft and approachable to intense and almost as structured as Cabernet Sauvignon. Vino Valpredo's 2012 Merlot leans toward the softer, more elegant side with fruit sourced from some of the region's most prized vineyards. Refined, graceful aromas of red currant, plum, dried cranberries and just a hint of wet gravel blend together seamlessly on the nose, while flavors of plum, dried cranberries, and baking spices are engulfed in soft, velvet-like tannins on the palate. Aged 10 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2022.

**GOLD MEDAL SPECIAL SELECTION**

## VINO VALPREDO 2013 CHARDONNAY SONOMA COUNTY

500 Cases Produced

One of Sonoma County's most prevalent grape varieties, Chardonnay thrives in this cool-climate region and produces some of the area's most outstanding wines. The Vino Valpredo 2013 Chardonnay finds a delicious balance between bright fruit flavors and subtle creaminess. Aromas of white peach, nectarine, orange rind and honeysuckle beautifully complement the medium-bodied palate with bright acidity and flavors of savory pear and citrus. The perfect Chardonnay for a picnic or with any meal! 100% Chardonnay. Enjoy now until 2018.

**GOLD MEDAL SPECIAL SELECTION**

**HOW WE CHOOSE OUR WINES:** Gold Medal Wine Club showcases 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 (see [goldmedalwineclub.com/resources/wine-ratings](http://goldmedalwineclub.com/resources/wine-ratings)). On occasion, we feature a pair of wines which are newly released by the winery and which medals and reviews are forthcoming. Each and every selection is a superb wine made in small quantities and with very limited distribution. There are over 3,000 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



# Vino Valpredo Wine Co.



From the owners of the highly successful Fritz Underground Winery comes a new sister winery with a goal of showcasing the best varietals and vineyards Sonoma County has to offer.

To tell the story of Vino Valpredo Wine Company, one must start at the beginning with the establishment of its larger sister winery, Dry Creek Valley's Fritz Underground Winery.

Fritz Underground Winery traces its roots back to 1971, when founders Jay and Barbara Fritz sought a weekend retreat for their growing family. Fritz's business was international shipping and customs work and was located in San Francisco. He traveled extensively abroad and the thought of a bucolic setting when he returned from those trips seemed attractive. Sonoma County's famous Dry Creek Valley beckoned and a suitable piece of land was found on which to plant grapes.

Initially, the grapes were sold to other wineries. In 1979, Jay Fritz decided to enter the winery side of the business and Fritz Underground Winery was born.

Jay Fritz was also a visionary, one of the more significant to inhabit Sonoma County in quite some time. He envisioned his property as a green space environment before 'green space'



Vino Valpredo wines are made at its larger sister winery, Fritz Underground Winery, built into the side of a picturesque hill atop the northernmost region of Dry Creek Valley. Its naturally cool temperatures and three-tiered gravity-flow winery system help preserve the delicate nuances present in the prized Sonoma County fruit destined for the Vino Valpredo wines.



The owners of this month's Gold Wine Club feature, Natalia Valpredo Fritz and husband Clay Fritz, work tirelessly in their search for top quality Sonoma vineyards and handcrafted, artisan winemaking. Their dedication a testament to the founding of the original Fritz Winery and a commitment to the future of their family of winery brands.

became a worldwide crusade. He carefully studied his property before choosing an acceptable location on which to build. First, the site was excavated (two stories worth) with the idea of reusing the dirt after the winery was built. The cool, subterranean excavation became the cellar and aging space for the new winery. The dirt was then moved to the top of the winery, effectively making it an underground winery.

For the outside, Jay Fritz chose the work of 19th Century Catalan architect Antoni Gaudi as his inspiration. Imposing rounded windows dominate the site, offering a marvelous commune with nature and a living testament to the importance of the grape.

The impressive structure employs a full gravity flow process for its winemaking. Such a process is quite beneficial to the pressed juice and keeps oxidation down to a minimum and helps the aromatic aspects of the wine. The process helps promote fullness in the wines and provides some lingering aspects to their finish.

Fast forward to 2010. Jay Fritz has handed the reins of the winery over to his son, Clay Friz, who now oversees all day-to-day operations. Clay had ideas in mind of how to expand Fritz Winery, and began introducing ultra-boutique sister winery labels - one being the award-winning Vino Valpredo brand of this month's Gold Wine Club feature.

*Continued on Page 4*





## Brad Longton, WINEMAKER

A number of things about winemaker Brad Longton make him unique among California’s relatively tight brotherhood of winemakers. First of all, he’s Australian. He hails from Perth in Western Australia, and has been in the United States (off and on) for the past two decades. Longton is also a vegetarian, somewhat unusual for a livelihood that often depends on matching wine flavors with specific foods, quite often meat-oriented dishes. Brad is also a self-taught winemaker, one who has learned on the job through the school of hard knocks and hard work. He is fortunate to have been tutored by one of the true heavyweights in the wine business, namely the iconic Heitz Cellar (and its stellar Martha’s Vineyard) where he worked for more than four years. Tall and athletic, he also enjoys basketball and his young family. He considers himself to possess a soft hand with his winemaking, a factor that is evident throughout the Vino Valpredo portfolio of wines.

## VINO VALPREDO

Continued from Page 3

Vino Valpredo (named after Clay’s wife, Natalia Valpredo Fritz) initially began as a special proprietary blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, named ‘Bianca Mia’ as an homage to their daughter Bianca. It has since grown to include other varietals (namely, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon), all produced in extremely limited quantities and sourced from top vineyard locations throughout Sonoma County.

While the focus of Fritz Winery had traditionally been on estate wines from the Dry Creek Valley, the new Vino Valpredo brand allowed the family to travel outside their immediate region and showcase the wonderful range of varietals and vineyards that Sonoma County had to offer. This addition has given Clay Fritz and winemaker Brad Longton great flexibility and inspiration in crafting new wines, as well as the ability to work with top sites and make truly unique, distinctive wines from vintage to vintage.

The goal with Vino Valpredo is to showcase the best of Sonoma County, and what better way to achieve this goal than

by sourcing fruit from premium vineyards, working with master winemaker Brad Longton, and by crafting the wines at the world class winemaking facility of Fritz Winery. The Vino Valpredo wines can be tasted at the recently opened Windsor Tasting Lounge, located in downtown Windsor, near the Town Green Park.

We applaud Clay Fritz for continuing his family’s legacy, his innovative nature, and for his long-standing reputation for crafting really good wines from Sonoma County. We are proud to feature his under-the-radar, ultra-boutique Vino Valpredo brand and hope you enjoy the selections. Cheers!





# Food pairings from Vino Valpredo



## CIDER ROASTED PORK TENDERLOIN

PAIR WITH THE VINO VALPREDO 2013 PINOT NOIR

- |                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 pork tenderloins                  | 1 tsp fresh ginger, finely minced |
| 1 12 oz. bottle of sparkling cider  | 2 tbsp olive oil                  |
| 1/2 tsp ground fennel               |                                   |
| 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon             |                                   |
| 1 tbsp coarsely ground black pepper |                                   |
| 3 tbsp Kosher salt                  |                                   |

In a medium bowl, combine the cider, 3 tbsp Kosher salt, ground pepper, ground fennel, ground cinnamon, and ginger. Mix well. Pour this mixture into a large Ziplock bag. Place the tenderloins in the Ziplock bag as well, and push out all the excess air. Seal the bag and put in the refrigerator. Please allow the pork to marinate for 6-8 hours. Preheat your oven 450 degrees. While the oven is preheating, take the tenderloins out of the refrigerator, remove from the plastic bag, and pat them dry with paper towels. Discard the marinade. Liberally coat the tenderloins with olive oil. Place on a baking sheet. Once the oven is at a solid 450 degrees, roast the pork for 20-25 minutes. You should check with a meat thermometer that the inner temperature of the pork is at least 125 degrees. Remove from the oven and cover tightly with foil for 5-7 minutes. Slice on a diagonal, about 1/2 inch thick. *Recipe provided by Vino Valpredo.*



## CHILLED PEA SOUP WITH MINT

PAIR WITH THE VINO VALPREDO 2013 CHARDONNAY

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 2 tbsp unsalted butter                           | Grated zest of 1 lemon  |
| 2 shallots, minced                               | Olive oil for drizzling |
| 3 cups chicken broth                             |                         |
| 3 cups shelled English peas (or frozen)          |                         |
| 1/2 cup fresh chopped mint                       |                         |
| 1 tbsp sour cream, Greek yogurt or crème fraîche |                         |

In a large, heavy pot over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add the shallots and cook until they are soft and fragrant. Sprinkle them with Kosher salt. Cook them for about 5 minutes. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add the peas (set a few aside for garnish) and cook until they are tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in the chopped mint. Remove from the heat and let cool. Working in batches, purée the soup in a blender or food processor. Return to the pot and stir in the sour cream, yogurt or crème fraîche. Remove from heat and stir in the lemon zest. Season with salt and pepper. Allow it to cool to room temperature before setting in the refrigerator to chill completely - a few hours or overnight. When you serve the soup, drizzle a teaspoon of olive oil over the top to make this soup "souper" luscious! *Recipe provided by Vino Valpredo.*





## Clay Fritz, IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Clayton (Clay) Fritz is only 45 years old, but, by his own account, the personable owner of Fritz Underground Winery has already stacked a great deal of living into those four and a half decades. He is of French/Swiss ancestry and his family originally emigrated from Alsace in the 1930's.

When he was called on to run the family winery (Fritz) more than ten years ago, he realized the decision would shape the remainder of his life.

"When I took over the winery from my parents, I knew it would require a great commitment and I was prepared for all eventualities," he began. "Mom and Dad had done a great job up to that point, but I saw that some changes were needed in order for us to go forward. I was given the chance to do things my way, and, fortunately, it has all worked out for the best."

A fourth generation San Franciscan, Clay Fritz graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA with a degree in religion and philosophy.

"My degree didn't exactly prepare me for the wine business," Fritz confessed. "But my 30th birthday came and my parents wanted to pass on the winery to someone. That someone turned out to be me. My Dad always said that Fritz Winery should be run by a Fritz and I agreed with his way of thinking."

Clay Fritz's intention was to reinvigorate the winery and scale it to a position that would invite additional national exposure.

"We had always been very popular around Sonoma and in California," he explained further. "But, we had never really concentrated on the rest of the country. I wanted to make artisan-style wines that people could easily identify with and then position them at a price level that everyone could afford. That might sound simple to do, but, in truth, it isn't all that easy to accomplish."

In addition to maintaining the prized Zinfandel and Sauvignon Blanc from the Dry Creek Valley estate property,

under the Fritz brand, Clay also made the decision to continue buying fruit from other sources in surrounding Sonoma County.



"We have had a long time relationship with a number of top growers around here," Fritz continued. "People like the Dutton Family who own some of the best vineyards in Sonoma, if not all of California. I strove to reinforce our relationship with many of these families and was able to begin producing wines with distinctive personalities. This led to more awards and higher scores for the winery that ultimately benefited what we were attempting to achieve."

These wines with 'distinctive personalities' that Clay mentions are those of Fritz Winery's sister brands - Vino Valpredo, Jenner, and Lost Canyon. Vino Valpredo intends to showcase the best of Sonoma County, featuring the top varietals and vineyards planted there; Jenner features exclusively Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Sonoma Coast vineyards; and Lost Canyon is a label for single vineyard wines from the Russian River Valley.

While Fritz is extremely proud of his Estate Reserve Zinfandel (Fritz Winery) that has always been a high-scoring, top-rated consumer favorite, he also turns to some of these lesser known wines and brands as his greatest achievements.

"To me, making a truly hand-crafted wine is a work of art. If you can achieve elegance in the bottle without it costing a fortune, you have something special," Fritz concluded.

Clay Fritz himself is something special, in a relaxed sort of way. He is a person that has taken what he was given and made the best of it, no matter the circumstances. He is a strong believer in family and the proper way of doing business and this has aided Fritz Underground Winery's reemergence into the top echelons of California wineries.





## Wine Region: SONOMA COUNTY



Most wine growers will agree that Sonoma County is one of the most diverse grape growing regions in the world. Situated between the Pacific Ocean and Napa Valley, and north of San Pablo Bay, Sonoma County is home to 17 unique AVA's with more than 60 wine grape varieties planted across the sprawling region. As Master Sommelier, Keith Goldston, puts it, "Sonoma County is an incredible spot to make many different styles of wines - it's almost like a whole country in one county."

One of the factors that leads to Sonoma's diversity is its unique geographical setting - from valleys, plains, and mountaintops, to forests, riverbeds, and ocean cliffs, Sonoma offers a bit of everything to adventurous wine grape growers. The area's soil structure is defined by a rare combination of ash and lava, and in addition to this, Sonoma is also home to more soil types than are found in all of France. This creates a unique combination of soil and geographic rarities unlike any other region in the world.

Sonoma County is also heavily influenced by its close proximity to the ocean, and its cool nights and temperate days create the perfect conditions to draw in layers of oceanic fog to cool the warmer inland valleys. The fog is perfectly channeled through the region by way of the Russian River.

With such variations in the geography and climate, Sonoma is home to nearly an infinite array of microclimates that gives wine grape growers an exciting and inspiring landscape to work with. Sonoma's wines enjoy global recognition and have won countless national and international wine awards.

It is no wonder that wineries such as this month's *Vino Valpredo* have chosen to showcase the entire Sonoma County region in their portfolio of wines. It is truly a land of unlimited potential for grape growing and winemaking.

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This month's *Gold Club* featured *Plus!* wine:  
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**90 POINTS** - *San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition*  
Retail Price at the Winery: \$35.00



# Wine Winyard: TEST YOUR WINEIQ!



## What is the Sonoma Conjunctive Labeling Law?

The Sonoma Conjunctive Labeling Law applies to wines bottled on or after January 1st of 2014 and it refers to the labeling of wine to show both the region and sub-region (AVA) of its origin. In this case, it means that 'Sonoma County' must be on the label of all Sonoma County wines, along with any AVA designation (for example, a wine from Sonoma Coast must include both 'Sonoma Coast' and 'Sonoma County' on the label). Why is this important? It helps build a brand for Sonoma County wines while preserving and strengthening Sonoma County's position as a recognized world-class wine region. It also helps increase the recognition for every AVA within Sonoma County, both well-known and less familiar, and ensures that consumers understand where they are.

## How many AVA's (American Viticultural Areas) are within Sonoma County?

17 AVA's are located within the boundaries of Sonoma County, each with its own distinctive characteristics. These diverse AVA's each have a unique climate and geography - from warm, sunny days to cooler, fog covered valley floors, mountaintops, riverbeds and ocean cliffs, the variations are seemingly endless and all influence, as well as define, the wine in your glass. Many believe that you won't find a more diverse region for grape growing than Sonoma County.

## What makes Sonoma County's soil so unique?

Long before vineyards covered the land, Sonoma County was an inland sea. Tectonic upheavals of the coastal plates created the present day Mayacamas Mountains that form the eastern boundary of the county, and created a soil structure in these areas defined by ash and lava. This is an extremely rare distinction, and in addition to this, Sonoma County is actually home to more soil types than are found in all of France!

## The Gold Medal Wine Store



Instant! Membership Rewards saves you 11% to 38% off Vino Valpredo wines!

VINO VALPREDO	Retail Price at Winery		Gold Medal Membership Rewards Pricing*		
			2+ btls.	6+ btls.	12+ btls.
2013 Pinot Noir Russian River Valley	<del>\$25.00/btl.</del>	2-Bottle Members:	\$19.50	\$17.83	\$17.00
		4-Bottle Members:	\$19.50	\$17.00	\$15.75
2012 Merlot Sonoma County	<del>\$30.00/btl.</del>	2-Bottle Members:	\$19.50	\$17.83	\$17.00
		4-Bottle Members:	\$19.50	\$17.00	\$15.75
2013 Chardonnay Sonoma County	<del>\$22.00/btl.</del>	2-Bottle Members:	\$19.50	\$17.83	\$17.00
		4-Bottle Members:	\$19.50	\$17.00	\$15.75

\*Effective per bottle prices after Membership Rewards discount is applied at checkout.

[www.GoldMedalWineClub.com/store](http://www.GoldMedalWineClub.com/store)

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