

## What's So Funny About Peace, Love and Artisan Wine

Terry Theise has just come out with his first book called *Reading Between the Wines*. For those unfamiliar with Mr. Theise, he has been an importer and champion of great German and Austrian wines, and grower/producer Champagnes.

I have never met Theise, but I feel we are connected through his wine selections. I can't begin to count the number of Donnhoff, Schaefer and Christoffel German Rieslings I've consumed over the years. And his Champagne stars, such as Pierre Gimonnet, Gaston Chiquet and Pierre Peters (the man with the same first and last name) are just about the only wines I drink during the month of December.

If he never uttered a word about wine, Theise would be wine-articulate simply through his pioneering work bringing these outstanding wines to America. Fortunately for us though, he is an articulate writer; offering some of the most lucid and thoughtful opinions on wine today.

In chapter 2 of the book, titled "What matters (and what doesn't) in wine," Theise says it is what is not important about wine which takes up far too much of the discourse. He says "those who assert value judgments over work they don't actually do, risk sounding fatuous." I completely agree and was painfully reminded of this a couple of months ago when wine bloggers, wine hipsters and some credible wine makers were arguing over what constitutes a "natural wine."



*To inoculate or not to inoculate,  
that is not the question.*

In a noble attempt to draw attention to authentic artisan wines, a group of San Francisco sommeliers and fine wine shop merchants recently created "Natural Wine Week." The premise was to feature several producers who farm their grapes organically or biodynamically, believe in minimizing manipulative winemaking, and favor terroir-driven wines.

Naturally (pun squarely intended), Unti was happy to have an opportunity to share our thoughts about artisan wine with City folks. Sounds fun and harmless, right? In the wine world online, apparently not.

One wine blogger criticized a participating restaurant for not adhering to her definition of natural winemaking; she didn't approve of the wineries selected. The blogger did not bother to substantiate her claims. A winery "social networker" agreed, but he also offered no supporting evidence. Unfortunately, some of the winery principles involved and the restaurant owner felt compelled to defend themselves and their winemaking methods. As Theise opines in his book, it is hard to believe wine attracts such controversy and meaningless blather.<sup>1</sup>

The entire dialogue was a perfect example of what doesn't matter in wine. What should matter is a winemaker's experience farming and making wine from his or her vineyard. Ultimately that determines how the wine tastes. After all, isn't that the most important issue here? A true artisan almost never has to explain anything.

Almost everyone connected with wine, including all of the above-mentioned parties, are trying to sell something. It is up to you to decide which folks are credible. I heed individuals who have tangible winemaking experience, or work closely with winemakers beyond more than one harvest season. Their opinions seem genuine, and not prone to following the latest marketing trend.

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<sup>1</sup> *Who has the time for this stuff anyway? It's all I can do to manage my fantasy league baseball and basketball teams online.*

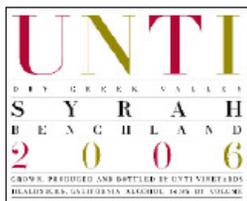
October mailing list discount offer:

**20% discount on the following wines  
when part of a 12-bottle case purchase:**

2006 Syrah Benchland  
2007 Petite Sirah  
2007 Zinfandel Arbolitos  
2008 Petit Frere

*Offer valid through December 15th*

## 2006 SYRAH BENCHLAND



I'm a sucker for a good vineyard - or at least one with personality. Good vineyards are like good friends: they can handle the good, bad and the ugly, because you can always count on them to stay true - no matter how many times you try to change their irrational behavior.

On the surface, the 2006 vintage did not produce the show-stopping wines we produced from this vineyard both before and after that year. No hedonistic, fruit bombs here. In 2006, we experienced more than our fair share of rain in the spring, which caused larger-than-normal berries. Additionally, the moderately cool growing season produced a Syrah that was not as overtly fruity as in 2004, 2005 or later seen in 2007. It is more in the savory and spicy flavor camp.

Yet, upon tasting our 2006 Benchland Syrah you'll think this wine is right in line with all of our other previous efforts. This is where it helps to have a vineyard with personality.

Benchland Syrah comes from the lowest yielding vines within our original 6-acre Syrah block. As such, it is the most expressive fruit we harvest in any vintage. You'll clearly recognize that smoky, blackberry bay leaf thang happening within a full-bodied Syrah labeled Unti. About half of this wine was whole cluster fermented in small 2-ton tanks, which amps up the floral/licorice aromas. It is a beautiful example of why we are fond of this Syrah vineyard.

*100% Syrah; 500 cases produced.*

*\$35/bottle, or \$28 when part of a case purchase.*

## 2007 PETITE SIRAH



We don't make much Petite Sirah. Our 3-acre vineyard block, located on the winery property, is not the best site for Petite Sirah. It is in a low-lying creek-side area, just east of where we grow Grenache, Mourvedre, Barbera and Montepulciano, near Dry Creek.

In retrospect, my dad would not have planted Petite Sirah in this site because the soils are deep and tend to retain moisture-not the best conditions for a vigorous vine producing tight clusters.

We usually have to wait until mid-October to get the grapes fully ripe, which means having to deal with bunch rot and shriveled grapes. Yipee! For several years running, our Petite Sirah grapes have won the Ugly Duckling prize here at Unti.

Over the past several years we've tried to mitigate this ugly situation by eliminating excessive amounts of fruit at veraison, and manicuring the remaining bunches to keep them from developing rot. We also manage the leaf canopy to protect from too much sun, but leave enough room for ventilation. By the time we are done, these grapes are worth a small fortune. It's as much fun as going to see Michael Richards do stand up comedy.

The 2007 vintage, combined with our efforts in the vineyard, produced awesome results. I'm not going to say the grapes were gorgeous (after all, even a well pedicured ugly foot is still...), but these were the best Petite Sirah grapes we've seen since 2002. Not surprisingly, the wine is pretty good, too.

Our Petite Sirah may not be subtle, but it is by no means an over-the-top wine. Like most all of our 2007 wines, the Petite is ripe, fruity, full-bodied and has built-to-last structure. What distinguishes our Petite Sirah from other local examples is acidity. I guess you would expect this from our Euro-obsessed winery. If you liked our 2002 or 2004, you'll love the 2007 PS.

*100% Petite Sirah; 150 cases produced.*

*\$28/bottle, or \$22.40 when part of a case purchase.*

**2007 ZINFANDEL “ARBOLITOS”**



Remember how we said we don’t make over-the-top Zinfandels here at Unti? Well, that will teach you to ever listen to me.

The very first wine we made as “home brewers” was from this 5-acre block of Zinfandel we call Arbolitos. Planted circa mid-1970’s, these head-pruned vines now look like little trees, hence the creative vineyard name.

We made that Zin in a 33-gallon plastic bin and used an aluminum baseball bat to punch down the cap during fermentation (shocking, I know). As expected, the wine didn’t turn out so well, but it was a great excuse to spend some time with my dad and two good friends, Ed Guelld and Jim Kopp. I have nowhere near enough space, or time here, to describe the conversations from that day.



*Hey Jim! What do you think of the Kinks? Are you kidding Ed? Who doesn't love the Kinks?*

We have been making a small amount of the Arbolitos to blend into our Zinfandel bottling because it is fruitier than the main component, Primitivo. But, in 2007, the Primitivo was ripe and plenty fruity on its own. The Arbolitos wine was typically fruity, but a little high-octane for our taste. It seemed to push our main Zinfandel over the edge, which is why we omitted it from the blend.

What would you do? Almost any other winery in Dry Creek would celebrate this wine and market it as a limited production, vineyard-designate, full-throttle Zin (because, let’s face it, that’s what we all really want in a wine isn’t it?). Tempting though it may be, we just can’t get there.

We decided, in our usual corporate manner (a high level 10 minute conversation with my dad in the winery parking lot), to price our 2007 Arbolitos below our normal Zinfandel. When you buy an assorted case from us this month, this wine will cost you \$16 a bottle. While this ripe and fruit-driven Zin might not be my favorite style, it looks awfully good next to most Zinfandels under \$20.

*100% Zinfandel; 97 cases produced.*

*\$20/bottle, or \$16 when part of a case purchase.*

**2008 PETIT FRERE**



By now many of you know that Petit Frere is our version of a Côtes du Rhône. It is always a highly calculated assemblage of whatever lots of Grenache, Mourvedre and Syrah are left-over after we have decided upon the blends for our Grenache and Syrah bottlings. If you think I’m downplaying this wine a tad, you would be right.

Despite the fact that PF is our “Oh, by the way” cuvée, this wine has solid vineyard pedigree. It comes from low-yielding Grenache, Mourvedre and Syrah, farmed as if it were going into a \$30 bottle of wine. As such, this little CDR wanna-be is more full-bodied and tannic than the average unpretentious Rhone blend. I might even go as far as saying the 2008 PF will age nicely over the next 3 years!

For drinking now, I recommend decanting this 2008 Petit Frere. If you are like me, and constantly on the look-out for solid, reasonably priced wine to have on hand for any occasion, look no further. Petit Frere is the perfect solution to that age-old dilemma of finding an inexpensive wine you serve to a crowd of your not-so knowledgeable friends or family. And you will actually enjoy drinking it with them.

*72% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 13% Mourvedre; 440 cases produced.*

*\$18/bottle, or \$14.40 when part of a case purchase.*

**UNTI VINEYARDS**

4202 Dry Creek Road  
 PO Box 1899  
 Healdsburg, CA 95448

- 2006 Syrah Benchland**
- 2007 Petite Sirah**
- 2007 Zinfandel Arbolitos**
- 2008 Petit Frere**

**Ordering Information:** Conveniently **order online** through our secure store page at: [www.UntiVineyards.com](http://www.UntiVineyards.com) or **call us** at (707) 433-5590 or **fax us** this form to (707) 433-5591 or **mail us** this form to Unti Vineyards, PO Box 1899, Healdsburg, CA 95448.

Today's Date \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

**Shipping Information:**

Residence (add \$4/box to Shipping)  Business

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 c/o Business: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ST: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB req'd for OH, GA, MI, WI & HI \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_  
 Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone#: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment Information:**

Charge to Credit Card below  or Check enclosed

Visa/MC/AMEX/Discover # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ Ver#: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Billing Address (if diff. from above): \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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*Purchasers must be 21 or older.  
 An adult signature will be required at delivery.  
 Shipping only to states where permitted by law.*

**\* 20% off new release wines marked with asterisk when part of a 12-bottle case purchase purchase.**

New Releases:	# Bottles	Price	Extension
2006 Syrah Benchland *	<input type="text"/>	@ \$35 =	<input type="text"/>
2007 Petite Sirah *.....	<input type="text"/>	@ \$28 =	<input type="text"/>
2007 Zinfandel Arbolitos *	<input type="text"/>	@ \$20 =	<input type="text"/>
2008 Petit Frere *.....	<input type="text"/>	@ \$18 =	<input type="text"/>

**Also Available:**

2007 Grenache.....	<input type="text"/>	@ \$30 =	<input type="text"/>
2007 Zinfandel.....	<input type="text"/>	@ \$26 =	<input type="text"/>
2006 Syrah.....	<input type="text"/>	@ \$26 =	<input type="text"/>

<b>Subtotal =</b>	<input type="text"/>
(6-11 bottles = 5%, 12-35 = 10%, 36+ = 20%) <b>Discounts =</b>	( <input type="text"/> )
<b>New Subtotal =</b>	<input type="text"/>
(CA = 9%; Other states, call for rate) <b>Taxes =</b>	<input type="text"/>
Use chart (+\$4/box for Residential address) <b>Shipping =</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>TOTAL =</b>	<input type="text"/>

SHIPPING TO A <b>BUSINESS</b> ADDRESS RATES <i>(subject to change)</i>		
STATE*	6 PK BOX (4-6 btls)	12 PK BOX (7-12 btls)
Northern CA	\$14 - Ground	\$19 - Ground
So. CA, AZ, CO, ID, NM, NV, OR, WA, WY	\$17 - Ground \$26 - 3Day \$32 - 2Day	\$25 - Ground \$45 - 3Day \$54 - 2Day
IA, MO, ND, MI, MN, TX	\$21 - Ground \$37 - 3Day \$49 - 2 Day	\$33 - Ground \$65 - 3Day \$79 - 2Day
CT, DC, FL, GA, IL, IN, LA, NC, NH, NY, OH, RI, VA, WI	\$23 - Ground \$42 - 3Day \$52 - 2Day	\$38 - Ground \$73 - 3Day \$89 - 2Day
AK, HI	\$55 - 2Day	\$89 - 2Day
Add \$4/box if shipping to a <b>Residential</b> address. *If your state is not listed, call for options.		