



TOBIN
JAMES
CELLARS

JAMES GANG GAZETTE

VOLUME 51

FALL 2023

A longtime customer/friend couple returned to our tasting room the other day. After catching up, we talked about the old days, back when there were only about 18 wineries in Paso Robles, when we were still just discovering all the varieties that could thrive here. They reminisced about one of the first wine club cruises we did, to Italy, and how that trip remains one of their best and most cherished lasting memory. We laughed at how we all had our first taste of Limoncello together at a small bar in Sorrento, and how that led to one of the winery's greatest adventure outside of making wine. Laughing over the story, I realized it is something to share with everyone. There are a few hundred of you that know what I'm about to tell, because you were some of the fortunate few who got to enjoy the spoils of that fateful Limoncello tasting.

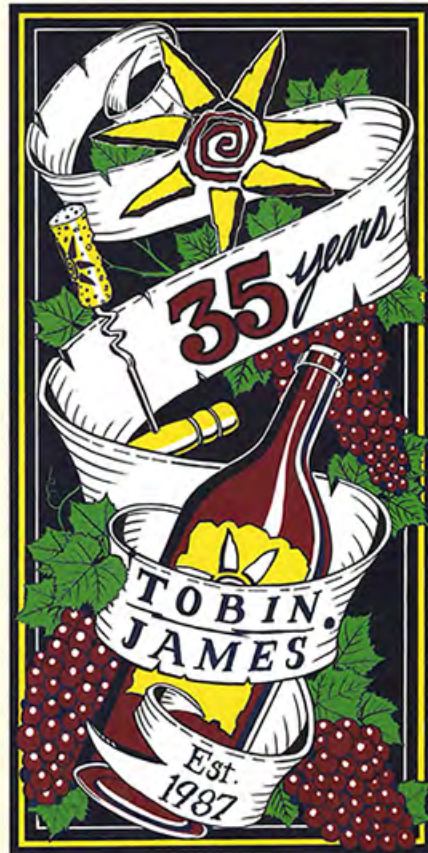
By now, most of the world has heard of or tasted the famous Limoncello that originated in Sorrento, Italy. In 2000, when we went on our wine club cruise, it was still pretty obscure, at least to me. If you haven't heard of it, it's a liqueur made from the outer skin, the zest of the lemon, adding alcohol and simple syrup to make an ethereal libation. But these Sorrento lemons are not your grocery store variety, they are grapefruit size lemons with thick skins that thrive in Italy's sun-soaked climate. Real Limoncello could only be found in Italy, at least so we thought.

A few weeks go by after the cruise and the last of our limoncello is drunk and we talk of how to get more. Wait... I'm a winemaker, I can make anything alcoholic, right? And we'll make it with a winemaker's mentality. Balanced, complex, dare I say, perfect? My wife Claire and I, and our winery chef at the time, Chef Erik, decide to make a batch. We went online to search recipes and found several. All pretty much the same. But what went right past me was that all of the recipes called for 80 proof vodka, which is what a normal person has access to and would use. Not to a winemaker with an alcohol license. We would use pure grain alcohol and real Sorrento lemons imported from our food vendor.

190 Proof pure grain alcohol can be purchased in 5-gallon carboys or in 50-gallon drums. 5 gallons isn't near enough I thought, so a drum of 50 gallons was ordered and 20 lugs of Sorrento lemons. A week or so later we were ready to go. The three of us pulled up some chairs in the winery after dinner, grabbed a glass of wine and began zesting those lemons. After three hours, we had barely dented the first lug. The first of many miscalculations. We enlisted the help of our staff the next evening, and although fun, we still had only finished less than 2 lugs. Now we call our labor contractor to send us 12 helpers to zest. We finished the week with nowhere near enough zest for a 50-gallon drum. The zest goes into the drum to infuse into the alcohol, but those 20 lugs didn't give us enough zest. We needed way more

lemons. So, another order for 20 more lugs comes in. Not enough. 20 more lugs, not enough. Finally at 80 lugs finished, we felt we had the right amount. Surely that could be the only thing we miscalculated. Let me continue.

With the zest in the alcohol, all we had to do was wait the 4 to 6 weeks it would take to infuse. A drop to taste and the color gone from the zest tells you when it's ready. I calculate the amount of sugar needed to make a perfect simple syrup from the purest sugar and water. The syrup and alcohol join together. Perfect, right? Nope, way too alcoholic. Add more syrup. Nope, still too alcoholic. What's wrong? Oh no, my calculations were based on internet recipes which used vodka at 80 proof, not 190 proof pure alcohol. We need way more water and lots more sugar. We were determined to finish making it that evening, so Erik heads to our local supermarket and loads 2 carts full to the brim of C and H sugar. He figured that he would need caffeine to get him through what was obviously going to become a long night, so while he was shopping, he also bought a diet soda. The look on the clerk when he approached with 200 pounds of sugar and a Diet Coke... priceless!



Final miscalculation. The volume of limoncello we ended up with. Our dream was to produce 10-25 cases for us to share with our friends and have plenty to drink for ourselves over a few years. But now the math showed over 150 cases worth. We need more glass containers!

Anyways, it's finally in the bottle and tasting delicious, but what does one do with 2000 bottles of limoncello? Why, give it away to anyone that will take it. Most quite happily, as it is/was delicious. 23 years later, I think

we still have 12 cases or so left, and still tasting good. As I look back on that adventure, I'm thankful I don't make those kinds of miscalculations when making wine. We'd need a bigger warehouse!

Oh, and that couple always gets a case of it every visit, as long as we still have some. And no, we won't be making any more. A fun memory that all started with one of our wine club cruises. Many of you reading this have joined us for the now many cruises we have done. Every year or two finds our most passionate Tobin James wine drinkers on a complete takeover of a cruise ship where it's like being in the tasting room for a week. Except you wake up in a new place every morning. We have a great one set to sail in February through the Panama Canal. That one is sold out, but our next cruise was just solidified. We are cruising on the Danube in May of 2025. Sounds far off, but it will be here in a blink of an eye. All cruises sell out years before we sail, so please consider joining us. It will be a lifetime memory, with lifetime friendships made.

What's happening at the winery? Harvest is in full bloom and another beautiful vintage that Paso Robles gives us every year. You'll be tasting those wines soon. But you got a box of our best to dive into right now.

I do want to mention our annual James Gang Festival. This is our 25th anniversary of this party, so it will be very special. Please book early, this event always sells out early. It's two nights of the same party, come to one or both! March 15th and 16th.

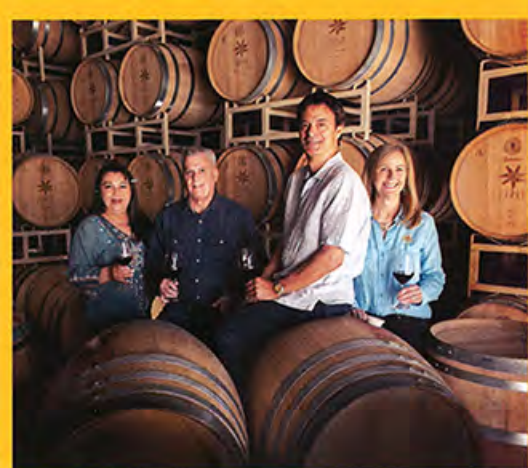
You've got a great box of wine in your hands. Eight fantastic wines we are so proud to have you sip and share, including the quickly rising to fame, "the blend". Turn the page to read all about them.

That's all for now, if you run in to me in the tasting room, I'll dig out some limoncello, ha-ha! As always, hope to see soon in our tasting room.

Cheers!

Lance





FALL 2023 - JAMES GANG WINE CLUB SELECTIONS

1. 2020 Zinfandel, Dusi Vineyard

\$38 per bottle

90-year-old+ vines! Dry farmed and head trained. Arguably – the most famous Zinfandel vineyard in the world. Always one of the best Zinfandels we do all year. Zin aficionados can pick a Dusi blindfolded because of its consistently unique flavors. This 100% Dusi bottling is a tradition at Tobin James; our first was a 1985 vintage! Wow! Rich, thick, and jammy, this will improve in a few years, but it is certainly ready to enjoy now. As always, we have a small supply remaining, so call for re-orders.

2. 2020 Zinfandel, The French Camp Vineyard

\$38 per bottle

The French Camp Vineyard is quite the amazing vineyard. We make no commitments to bottling a vineyard separately each year. It must be great and have a similar flavor profile that speaks of that vineyard. French Camp vineyard does this year after year. We bring in several blocks of fruit from French Camp, so we have the luxury of blending the best of the best from that vineyard. This wine always has a huge core of jammy raspberry with nuances of spice and cracked pepper. Heavily seasoned baby back ribs slow roasted on the grill comes to mind, but this is a very versatile food wine. Perfect now and will hold for 3-5 more years. About 200 cases remain, so call for re-orders soon.

3. 2020 the blend

\$155 per bottle

A new benchmark for excellence has arrived! Our latest creation is a blend of our best wines in the cellar. Paso Robles has become acclaimed for its eclectic blends and this is no exception. We will continue to create this wine each year, but only if we can blend a masterpiece such as this gem. This year's blend consists of Tannat, Petite Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Zinfandel. Unconventional? Yes, but an absolute gem! This wine will age gracefully for many years, but it is perfect now. Pair with any rich and full-flavored dishes, and of course, anything off the grill. We have 100 cases for reorders and your wine club discounts apply.

4. 2018 Merlot, Silver Reserve

\$52 per bottle

Merlot got a bad rap many years ago because of the movie "Sideways." What a shame! It is true back in the 90's, a number of large wineries jumped on the fast-growing popularity of Merlot and produced some pretty mediocre wines. But some of the best and most expensive wines in the world are made from Merlot. We had been making a single Merlot for years, but when we looked at the 2018's, we discovered that we had a few vineyards that produced a wine even more extraordinary than our wonderful "Made in the Shade" Merlot. We bottled this incredible expression of 2018 Merlot so that everyone can experience what a great Merlot should taste like! Ready to drink now, but will hold and maybe improve a bit over the next 1 to 3 years. Pair with rich and full-flavored dishes. Enjoy!

5. 2018 BIG SHOT

\$58 per bottle

This is our third vintage producing the BIG SHOT, but already an iconic blend here at the winery. A spectacular creation of what Paso Robles is excelling at, Rhone style blends. We have blended our finest Syrah (42.7%), Grenache (27.3%), Petite Sirah (18.2%), Mourvedre (10%), Counoise (1.8%) to create a rich, dense wine with tons of layers and structure. Ripe blackberry and subtle spice aromas give way to a rounded, juicy wine with the perfect amount of oak and a long lingering finish. Pair this with your favorite grilled meats or rich braised meat dishes. This wine is delicious now, but will continue to evolve for years to come. Very limited supplies remain available.



8950 Union Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446

805•239•2204

www.tobinjames.com

info@tobinjames.com





6. 2018 Petit Verdot, James Gang Reserve

\$48 per bottle

Only our seventh Petit Verdot to go into our wine club shipments! We have been making a Petit Verdot for many years, but only in small quantities, as the vineyards we source from are small. But thanks to the amazing wines that come from these vineyards, the vineyards have expanded to allow us to increase our case production while maintaining the same delicious quality. Petit Verdot is known as a Bordeaux varietal, where it is generally blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot to make a more complex wine. Our Petit Verdot is so wonderful and complex by itself; we've once again decided to bottle it on its own. We know of very few wineries that bottle 100% Petit Verdot. This is a big, concentrated and juicy wine with velvety tannins. It will pair well with all kinds of meats, particularly braised, or off the grill. This wine will continue to improve for a few more years and will continue to hold for many years to come. Only a few cases remain. Enjoy!

7. 2021 Chardonnay, Radiance

\$20 per bottle

This is one delicious Chardonnay! Vibrant and racy, this luscious wine bursts with zesty lemon, pear and pineapple on the nose and palate. Mouthwateringly, perfect acidity that makes you crave your next sip over and over again. Pair it with fresh cracked crab, shrimp, fish in light buttery sauces or Asian spices, or light veggie-laden pastas. Anytime is a Radiance time. Relax with a glass!

8. 2020 Port, James Gang Reserve

\$28 per bottle

We have always wanted to make a true Port using authentic port varietals and port winemaking techniques, but we could not find the right grapes. So, we decided to plant some! In 2004 we planted a vineyard with Tinto Cão, Touriga Nacional, and Souzao. Our first full harvest with these grapes was 2009. After starting fermentation, we added the best brandy imaginable to stop fermentation with 10% residual grape sugar, exactly the method employed in Portugal. We then aged it in barrels for 2 years and then aged it in the bottle for a year before releasing it. This is the method for a true Vintage Port. We believe this Port will continue to improve in the bottle for many, many years, but why wait? It is absolutely delicious now. Enjoy after dinner with Blue or Stilton cheeses, almonds, anything chocolate, or all by itself!

All this for \$205⁰⁰!

Shipping included in California. Plus tax and shipping outside California.

Our Gift To You!

Of course there's more!

We've got a fantastic cheese/cutting board for you with a handy cheese knife included. Lots of ideas come to mind for its many possible uses, but one unique one was suggested to us. Break open our cookbook you got from our previous shipment, pick your favorite pizza recipe from it, and cook away. Use your new board as a pizza peel. Enjoy, and don't forget to look in the cheese board box for the cheese knife.

Retail Value is \$34.95 per cheese board



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805•239•2204 www.tobinjames.com info@tobinjames.com



Holiday Package Specials:

Holiday Giving & Receiving



\$199

1 bottle of each wine

"Cabernet Sauvignon" Silver Reserve

"FatBoy" Zinfandel

"Lagrein" Silver Reserve

"Cabernet Sauvignon" James Gang Reserve

"Ballistic" Zinfandel

"Private Stash" Meritage Blend

one-time only \$25 flat rate shipping to continental U.S.

complimentary shipping in California

Blue Moon Christmas



\$215

1 bottle of each wine

"Blue Moon Reserve" Zinfandel

"Blue Moon Reserve" Cabernet Sauvignon

"Blue Moon Reserve" Syrah

includes complimentary shipping in the continental U.S.

Don't miss out on any of the wine-soaked fun this coming summer!

Jun 29, 2024 • Aug 17, 2024 • Sept 21, 2024



Join the conversation



@tobinjamescellars

Call Our
Corporate & Holiday Gift Line:

805-239-2204

Our elves will take care of your gift needs!

JAMES GANG FESTIVAL

Friday, March 15, 2024

Saturday, March 16 2024

Call for Tickets TODAY!

Here are a few of our current wines:

2021 Sauvignon Blanc - Sundance - \$20

2019 Cabernet Sauvignon - Notorious - \$22

2018 Cabernet Sauvignon

- James Gang Reserve - \$34

2018 Merlot - Made in the Shade - \$22

2019 Syrah - Rock - N - Roll - \$22

2019 Syrah - James Gang Reserve - \$55

2019 Petite Sirah - Midnight Magic - \$28

2018 Zinfandel - James Gang Reserve - \$34

2019 Malbec - James Gang Reserve - \$48

2018 Lagrein - Silver Reserve - \$52

2019 Late Harvest Zinfandel - \$20

2014 Dessert Wine - Charisma - \$20

2021 Moscato - Dream Catcher - \$14

NV Sparkling - Dream Weaver - \$14

Cruise with us
in 2025!

CALL US NOW!



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