

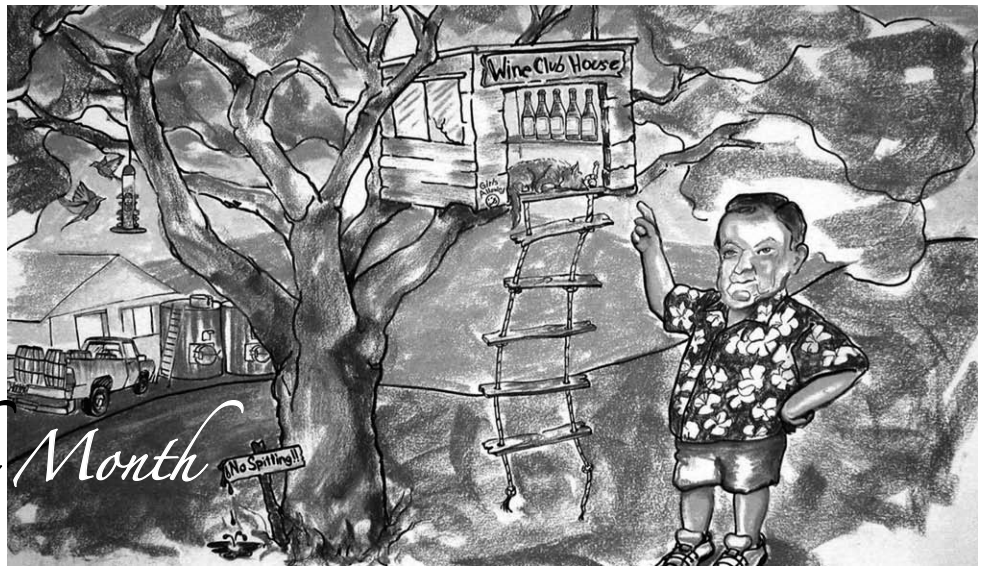


CELEBRATIONS WINE CLUB®

Celebrating over 20 years of good wine, good food, and good friends!

www.CelebrationsWineClub.com

California
Winery of the Month



Coombsville, the Newest Napa AVA *Tulocay Winery*



CelebrationsWineClub.com

Anna Maria Knapp, Owner
75 Pelican Way G I
San Rafael, CA 94901

1-800-700-6227

Celebrate@
CelebrationsWineClub.com

January 2012

Bill Cadman has raised a glass with some of the giants of Napa Valley like Joseph Heitz and Robert Mondavi, both of whom were his employers while he was establishing his own Tulocay Winery over 40 years ago. He could easily write a history of the Valley. And if he did, it would be as cogent as it would be hilarious. Very little escapes Bill Cadman's attention, and nothing avoids his sardonic wit. Today he is a very happy winemaker. A month ago, the U.S Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) designated Coombsville, where Tulocay Winery is located, as the 16th American Viticultural Area (AVA) in Napa County. What is an AVA anyway, and why should its existence delight Bill Cadman? If you call him for an appointment, you could ask him yourself the next time you happen to be in Napa. I was there last week, and what he told me I pass on to you, slightly edited for clarity and politeness.

The federal government defines an American Viticulture Area (AVA) as a winegrape growing region that is distinguishable by geographic features with defined boundaries. How does that help consumers determine quality?

When I got in the wine business, appellations or AVAs were simply counties, Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, Fresno, Monterey whatever, because the federal government could easily assess what the county boundary was. And then someone noticed that in France, for example in Bordeaux, they have smaller appellations,

not just Bordeaux. It's Saint-Emilion, Margaux, Saint-Estephe, and so on. Then as now, we insist on kissing French ass. If the French did it, it must be the correct way because the French knew how to make great wine, and we didn't. So then the appellation process began. But the federal government doesn't really address quality issues. It doesn't say that this wine from Coombsville tastes different from this wine in Stags Leap. That isn't the issue whereas in France it is. The character of the wine is different in each appellation because of grape growing and wine making conditions and regulations. The French address those differences. In other words, the wine from Margaux tastes different than the wine in Saint-Estephe. All the federal government does here is show you a map, and you see the wineries on this map. That's what they're going to call the Coombsville AVA, but they don't say you can plant only these grapes here. You can plant any grape you want. If the label says Coombsville, all you know is that 85 percent of the wine in the bottle was made from grapes grown in Coombsville. So what I'm saying is that it brings up the question, is the appellation really that indicative of what's in the bottle? Can anyone sit down with wines from all 16 appellations in Napa and bet you a \$100 that when the wines are lined up that they can identify what appellation the wines came from? I don't know that anyone can do that.

See WINERY back page

WINERY OF THE MONTH



WINERY from cover

So who benefits from an AVA designation?

I think that the main value of having an AVA is that it calls attention to the area and to the wineries in it and tends to generate enthusiasm among winemakers within the appellation. We are probably all much more enthusiastic about promoting Coombsville than we are Napa, because lord knows if we promoted Napa Valley as an appellation, that would include all those wealthy people in St. Helena, and they don't need our help. They probably wouldn't appreciate it anyway. I didn't make millions in Silicon Valley and then start a winery. The comment that I've always liked was when the idea of appellations hit the wine business many years ago and the TTB said okay we are going to set it up so that you wine people can apply for an appellation of origin with us. Well, you can send us a petition and draw us a map if you want to apply for a smaller appellation than a county. As all the wineries were scrambling to get an appellation, I remember my old boss, Joe Heitz, saying, "These people are just f..... around." His thought at the time was that Americans didn't even know where Napa Valley was let alone Dry Creek or Russian River. Why were they wasting time, he was wondering. I think what we're trying to promote here in Coombsville is an area that isn't Highway 29. There are no traffic jams out here. Robert Mondavi and Beringer and Louis Martini are not in the Coombsville appellation, and we're proud of it. We have about 25 wineries and almost all are small and require a prior appointment for wine tasting, not because we're snobs but simply because we want to make sure that someone's going to be available to pour a glass of wine for you. Coombsville is different from the rest of Napa. You call a Coombsville winery, and you might run into someone like, heaven forbid, Bill Cadman, who might sit with you for an hour or two and regale you with ribald sto-

ries of the wine business.

What grapes do best in the Coombsville area?

We all know that grape varieties have to be planted in the right areas, but I'm a little skeptical about that one because I think quite often people don't ask what's the best grape to grow in a certain area. What they do is ask what's the most expensive grape, and that's the one they plant. For example, the Haines Vineyard down the road was planted in 1968, and they planted Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, probably because they were advised by the University of California, Davis and the Winkler Scale of Climate Summation Days. This is the cool end of Napa Valley. It is a Region 2 with Region 1 being the coolest and then Regions 3, 4, and 5 being warmer. When they saw that Coombsville was a Region 2, they planted Pinot Noir and Chardonnay because those grapes thrive in cool areas. But the property across from my place was planted by Agustin Huneeus, who owns vineyards all over the world, and he planted Bordeaux varieties about ten years ago. The thing is that wineries will tell you that they planted a particular grape because they did climatological surveys and soil studies and then decided that the best grape to plant here is Cabernet Sauvignon. What they really mean is that they took a look at last year's weighted prices, and my god, Cabernet was the most expensive grape. And then they decide that this is the perfect place to plant Cabernet Sauvignon. Think of all the people who planted Merlot. Why in hell did they plant it all over California? When Merlot grows in the right area, it's an absolutely beautiful wine, but it grows well in so few places.

Do you taste much wine made outside of Napa?

Yeah, I do taste a lot. Sure. It's one of the nice things about having a winery. Every bottle of wine that I buy, I buy it not because I want to drink it but just for purely intellectual reasons. I was tempted to start a factory that made canned string beans, and I said, "No, hold yourself back and go for the wine option."

Have you ever tasted a Cabernet from elsewhere that you could have mistaken for one made in Napa?

Oh certainly. I've had quite a few Sonoma Cabernets that I thought could have been Napa Cabernets. When I got into the business, people used to say, "Look, there's a difference between California wine and French wine, and you can taste it." Yeah, red Bordeaux was different from Napa Cabernet because we had red Bordeaux and then Beaulieu Vineyard here in Napa, and those were different. And then it was the case when people used to say, "Napa County wines taste different than Sonoma County wines." And you might have agreed. There was a time when Sonoma wines were Sebastiani style. Take Zin, put it in a redwood tank for five years, wait till it turns brown, and then call it a reserve wine. And that was the difference. But then Sonoma wines got better, and I think that due to the machinations of Bob Mondavi, California wines got better. So I think people quit saying they could tell Napa wines from Sonoma. I can tell California from Bordeaux. But the sharp edges got sort of blurred somewhere around the 1970s, and people quit talking like that. I'm not so sure you'd bet money on being able to tell the differences. I've often told people that if you're walking down the sidewalk, you can always tell when people are from Napa Valley because, if you look at the back left shoulder of their jackets, it's worn thin from constantly patting themselves on the back. It wears out their clothes, but they can't see it.

RECOMMEND US

to family members, friends, business associates, and clients whom you think would appreciate Celebrations Wine Club®.

RECEIVE a complimentary third bottle of outstanding wine with your regular shipment of two bottles, when they join Celebrations Wine Club®.

Send this form to: Celebrations Wine Club®
75 Pelican Way G1
San Rafael, CA 94901

Or call: 1-800-700-6227

Anna Maria, please send information and a complementary issue of our newsletter to the following people. Please mention my name.

1. Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

2. Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Your name _____