

# *Society of Medical Friends of Wine*



*A Non-Profit 501(c)(3) Corporation, FEIN 94-6088159*

[www.medicalfriendsofwine.org](http://www.medicalfriendsofwine.org)

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## **NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2022**

### **President's Message**

David Schwartz, M.D.

Greetings, Society of Medical Friends of Wine Members!

As we enter this Fall season, we look forward to two treasured events for the Society, the annual French Club wine dinner and the annual Cheese & Wine event with Janet Fletcher. Of course, we are all hopeful for the rainy season to begin soon, particularly since the summer and fall grape harvests are completed. Rain or shine, let's attend these events and bring guests.

In mid-September, we encountered a last-minute postponement of our September 23<sup>rd</sup> **French Club** dinner due to a delayed elevator repair in the club's building. Since we've all had experience with disruptions during the Covid-19 era, the Executive Committee aimed to work with ever popular French Club to quickly reschedule the date. The Club had but one open date available on Thursday evening, October 27<sup>th</sup>, which we readily confirmed through Dr. Jim

Gallagher who is our liaison for this event. And your Society owes a great deal of gratitude to our past President Marc LeClerc for sponsoring us at the French Club.

The French Club schedule change then necessitated a subsequent date change for our annual **Cheese & Wine** event, previously scheduled for November 6<sup>th</sup>, and **now rescheduled for Sunday December 11<sup>th</sup>**. This change to a later date will give members wishing to attend both events a seven-week interim respite. Thank you for your patience as we addressed these scheduling issues and re-scheduled, given all of the variables.

I do look forward seeing as many of you as possible at these two events where we will first explore and share treasured wines from our cellars at the French Club dinner, paired with a spectacular menu prepared by Chef Balbastre. And subsequently in December, at the Mill Valley Community Center, we will take a guided tour of outstanding American cheeses selected by *Planet Cheese* author and food and wine expert Janet Fletcher. Dr. Bob Blumberg, SMFW Cellarmaster, will match Janet's cheeses with complementary wines. There will be ample time to share comments and perceptions during the wine review discussions at both events.

On another topic, Fall is the harvest season as well as a time to reflect on our personal bounty, and a season to support those organizations that enhance life in our communities. For nearly eighty-four years, the Society of Medical Friends of Wine has been dedicated to education about the health aspects of moderate consumption of wine. SMFW's mission is to develop a scientific understanding of wine's beneficial effects, and to encourage an appreciation of the conviviality and good fellowship that follows the proper use of wine. As a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, we depend on donations from members and friends to sustain our operating costs. Our volunteer Board of Directors and Executive Committee work with a very part-time Executive Secretary to plan, organize and manage a variety of wine education programs and tasks throughout the calendar year. Members play a key role in sustaining our historic organization through your participation and support. Nearly half of our members have given a cash donation to the Society this year in addition to their membership dues. As you consider the value of SMFW to your health and well-being, I urge you to include the Society in your 2022 charitable donations. Donations from your cellar are also appreciated for use at upcoming events. Contact Claire Keiser or Dr. Robert Blumberg for donation details.

I close with a message of gratitude to each member for your interest and participation, to our Board of Directors for diligent oversight and to Claire for administrative support, and to our friends in the wine and culinary industry that partner with SMFW to enrich our endeavors.

I look forward to speaking with you in person at our upcoming events, and I invite any member to contact me through the Society's e-mail on any topic related to our worthy adventure.

Cheers,

David Schwartz, MD, President

## Summary of the July 23, 2022 Petaluma Gap Wine Tour

by David Schwartz, M.D., President

On a beautiful Saturday morning in July, eighteen SMFW members and guests carpooled to the **Keller Estate Winery** in rural southeastern Petaluma. We gathered outside to begin our guided tour of this hilltop winery and to glimpse into Keller's Antique Auto Museum and take in the panoramic view above the San Pablo Bay. Notably, Estate Director Ana Keller was instrumental in establishing the Petaluma Gap AVA in 2018, and winemaker Julien Teichmann has conveyed his European sensibility to Keller Estate's sustainably certified vineyard. We were greeted with a taste of the 2018 "Bubbles" Brut Rose, a sparkling wine. Director of Hospitality and Sommelier Jose Cruz provided a detailed overview on the Petaluma Gap environment, including the benefits and challenges of the west to east cooling winds, and the impact of climate change and drought conditions on Keller's vineyards and olive tree orchards. Our tour of Keller's modern facilities and environmentally designed production area involved a walk through a long, barrel room cave tunnel. Following the winery tour we were seated at tables in the second-story gallery room to taste Keller's 2020 Alsatian-style Pinot Gris, followed by a unique 2018 "Rotie" Syrah-Viognier blend and two Pinot Noirs from the winery's library, the 2015 El Coro and La Cruz vineyards. I particularly liked the crisp, fruity Pinot Gris as I am a fan of Alsatian wines. The two pinots were enjoyable and well balanced and showed the benefit of several years of bottle age.



The barrel aging room at Keller Estate

At noon, we drove to downtown Petaluma via the pastoral Lakeville Highway to assemble for a picnic lunch in the barrel room of **Brooks Note Winery**, our second and final venue of the day.

Munching on boxed lunches and other goodies catered by Petaluma's Water Street Bistro, members met Garry Brooks, proprietor and Brooks Note winemaker, who graciously poured his Grenache Blanc to complement the lunch. Garry provided a history of the newly constructed Brooks Note Winery and Tasting Room that opened in August 2021 and is located on Petaluma Boulevard North. A veteran of Acacia, Ravenswood and Kosta Brown wineries and a graduate of the UC Davis Viticulture and Enology program, Garry summarized his winemaking journey leading to the founding of Brooks Note. He purchases grapes from select Sonoma County growers and produces his wines in the production facility adjacent to the Brooks Note Tasting Room. Garry poured tastes of the following Petaluma Gap varietals: a 2021 Rose of Pinot Noir; a 2021 Riesling; a 2019 Azaya Ranch Pinot Noir; a Marin County Pinot Noir and a 2019 Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir.

To minimize driving time for SMFW members, Garry had graciously invited his colleagues Al and Lisa Brayton, proprietors of **Thirty-Seven Wines**, to introduce their wines to our group in his barrel room. Al and Lisa established **Thirty-Seven Wines** at Sears Point Road in Sonoma in 2007, in the southeastern-most point of the Petaluma Gap. Their vineyard meets the San Pablo Bay wetlands with moderate temperatures and cooling breezes that move quickly through the coastal hills. Their Paradise View Vineyard, one-hundred plus acres planted in 1999, provides estate grapes to produce varietals including: Albarino, Grenache, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet-Franc, Petit Verdot and Merlot. Production is overseen by renowned winemaker Shane Finley. Both Al and Lisa shared stories of their experiences in stewarding their Petaluma Gap wines. We tasted *The Hermit* - a 2017 Saint-Emilion style blended Merlot & Cabernet-Franc; a 2019 Grenache; a 2019 Albarino; a 2019 Reserve Chardonnay and a 2018 Petit Verdot.

Overall, we learned that more than thirty wineries produce wines from the Petaluma Gap AVA. We were able to visit and experience the vineyards and wine making facilities at Keller Estate, and then experience Petaluma's newest winery and tasting room at Brooks Note. Our members agreed that the Wine Tour was an informative overview of this unique wine region.

Thanks to Drs. Bob Blumberg and Jim Gallagher, Claire Keiser, and Susan Schwartz for their help to plan and organize this tour with your President. We also thank our winemaker hosts—Keller Estate, Thirty-Seven Wines, and Brooks Note Winery and Tasting Room. Annual vintage or tasting tours have been a long tradition of the Society. Because of Covid, this was our first in person tour in three years, and we do look forward to future tasting tour adventures.

## Report of the 2022 Summer Tour of the Petaluma Gap Appellation

By Jim Gallagher, Ph.D.

The Petaluma Gap is one of the most recent wine growing appellations in California. There are many interesting characteristics of this appellation, including the unusual geographic distribution which extends on the east as far as the highway 37 junction with Highway 121 and then heads north westerly to the Sonoma coast at Bodega Bay, with the city of Petaluma lying near the center.



Climate here is different from most other California wine growing regions, as the gap in the Coastal Mountains allows wind and fog to cool the region. There are thirty members of the appellation, promoting key features of the wine growing region as well as the range of varietals produced.

Thanks to our President, David Schwartz, MD and his wife, Susan Schwartz, our current Secretary, the Society took a tour of the area this July. David and Susan took on the enormous project of putting together a highly educational program, offering insights to the most recent development and the many innovations that have occurred as the result of developing these new farmlands and wineries. David and Susan visited several wineries and engaged the principles to allow the Society an opportunity to visit and view firsthand what has occurred over the past twenty or more years in this newly farmed wine-grape area of Marin and Sonoma.

Our first stop was Keller Estate. Jose Cruz provided much of the history and wine philosophy that are the foundation of the Estate's wines. Of particular interest was the challenges presented by the microclimate of Petaluma Gap. Along the most eastern section of the appellation water supply has been a struggle and Keller Estate managed by projects that required cooperation of property owners to allow easements to transport water through their property.

We sampled our first wines in a lovely courtyard in front of the winery (See photos below). Then we were ushered through the Keller Estate caves to the fermentation room where all the wines are vinified.



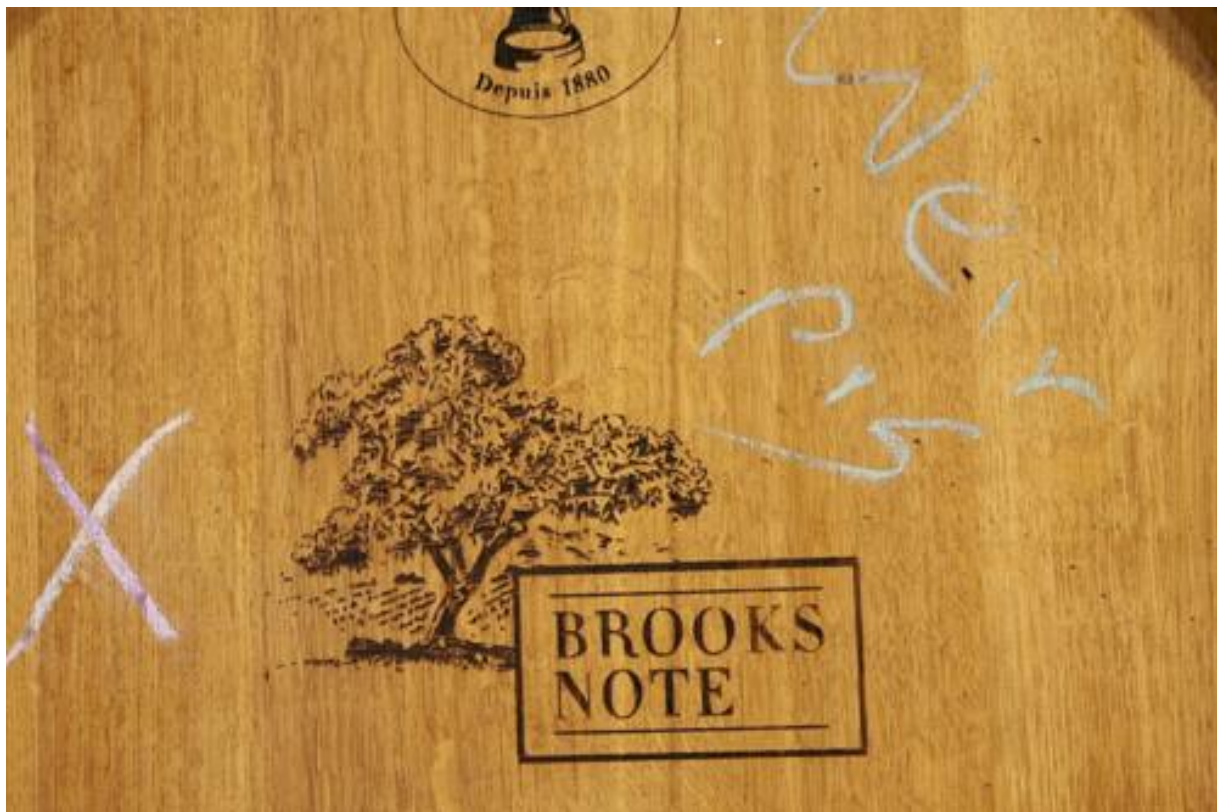






After an explanation of an architectural design that was highly dependent on physical properties, such as gravity flow, we also learned how the wine is vinified and coopered, with the goal of the whole process highlighting the region's character. We then headed to a tasting area where the wines we were to taste were waiting for our arrival.

When our tasting concluded we traveled to Brooks Note in Petaluma for the remainder of our tour which included a box lunch and further wine tasting.







Garry Brooks tells his story of what attracted him to the wine business and his particular fondness for the wine-grapes produced within the Petaluma Gap appellation. We were treated to an insightful history of the appellation as well as an excellent tasting of his use of different vineyards within the Appellation in making of the Brooks Note wines.

We tasted the following wines:

1. 2021 **Rose of Pinot Noir**, Brooks Note. A blush of pink cheeks hue with a light cherry bouquet; light body, excellent fruit, balance and medium long, lush aftertaste. Very refreshing, can be enjoyed by itself and with many foods. (\$26.00)
2. 2021 **Riesling**, Brooks Note. Pale straw hue; lovely bouquet of apricot, citrus/lemon and honey; light body, long dry aftertaste. Again, a highly attractive wine to be enjoyed alone or with many select dishes. (\$34.00)
3. 2019 **Pinot Noir**, Brooks Note Petaluma Gap 'Azaya Vineyard'. Medium dark red, light purple edge; medium light body, excellent fruit, balanced, excellent finish: rich, long, lush aftertaste. My favorite of the Pinots. (\$54.00)
4. 2019 **Pinot Noir**, Brooks Note, Marin. Medium red, purple edge; cherry and sweet oak bouquet; medium light body, very good cherry flavors, balanced and very good finish, long, lush aftertaste. (\$40.00).

5. 2019 **Pinot Noir**, Brooks Note, Petaluma Gap. Medium light red, medium purple; medium light body, excellent fruit, balanced; excellent finish: rich, long, lingering, lush aftertaste.

In general, I thought the wines of Brooks Note were very good and an excellent value. The facility is a great venue for visitors to Petaluma.



Al and Lisa Brayton both spoke about their roles as proprietors of **Thirty-Seven Vineyards**. Lisa is the vineyard manager for Thirty-Seven Wines and remarked that not all varieties of wine grapes adapt as well to the harsh climate of the southeastern region of the Petaluma Gap. Varietals such **Malbec** which have had comparatively mediocre success elsewhere in Napa and Sonoma, thrives here, and I found it to among the best I tasted that were produced in Northern California. The **Petit Verdot** was even more impressive as a successful vintaged varietal and one that the winery will have a struggle in maintaining sufficient supply as the demand for Petite Verdot is greater than its production at present. Both wines were very robust, while accessible. They are well suited for meat dishes and heavily flavored foods.



On the Thirty-Seven Wines vineyard, the prevailing winds thicken the skins allowing greater concentrations of flavor and tannins, imparting a solid structure to support the wines as they develop. Thirty-Seven's winemaker, Shane Finley, has been able to underscore terroir influence in both the Malbec and Petit Verdot.

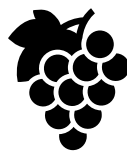




The above and below photos show our members engaged in tasting the wines of Brooks Note and Thirty- Seven Wines in the Brooks Note Barrel room which was a special arrangement negotiated by David Schwartz for our annual wine tour. This was a lovely setting, similar to our last Summer Tour tasting which Jack McElroy arranged at Benovia, Emeritus, and Gary Farrell (See photos on our website) <https://www.medicalfriendsofwine.org/2022-Photos.php>







## **An Article from the Medical Literature**

Reviewed by Dan Bikle, M.D., Ph.D.

### **Alcohol and the gut microbiome: good, bad, or indifferent to health?**

Title: Acetate reprograms gut microbiota during alcohol consumption

Authors: Martino C et al

Nature Communications 2022: [doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-31973](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-31973)

The authors of this paper were interested in the question whether changes in the gut microbiome induced by alcohol consumption contribute to the deleterious effects of alcohol on

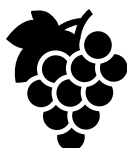
liver damage and the risk of rectal cancer? Studies of the microbiome, in particular the gut microbiome, have demonstrated remarkable systemic effects which can be manipulated by altering the microbiome by diet or fecal transplants from an individual with a healthy trait (eg. Leanness) to an individual with a non-healthy trait (eg. Obesity).

Alcohol consumption is known to alter the gut microbiome, and patients with alcohol-related liver disease have altered gut microbiota. Moreover, gavage of fecal samples from alcoholic hepatitis patients, but not controls, increased susceptibility of initially germ-free mice to ethanol-induced liver disease, and fecal transplantation from healthy subjects to those with alcoholic hepatitis improves their survival. So, one question is “what does alcohol consumption do to the gut microbiome that could contribute to liver disease”?

Most metabolism of ethanol occurs in the liver, with the enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase converting ethanol first to acetaldehyde, then further metabolizing it on to acetate. Acetate in turn is utilized in a number of biochemical pathways.

The authors were not able to show that alcohol was directly metabolized by the microbiome or that alcohol had an effect on the ability of the gut microbiome to produce short chain fatty acids, thought to be the major mechanism for their systemic actions. However, ethanol did alter the composition of the microbiome and affected the metabolism of acetate itself. Moreover, direct feeding with acetate exerted the same changes in the microbiome as did alcohol. That said, direct feeding with acetate did not cause liver damage in the absence of alcohol.

So where are we? The acetate produced from the metabolism of alcohol principally in the liver can feed back to alter the gut microbiome, but these alcohol induced changes in the microbiome do not by themselves lead to liver disease. Is this good or bad or irrelevant? Previous studies suggest that the microbiome might be involved in the alcohol induced liver disease, but this paper indicates that acetate induced changes in the microbiome is not the reason.



## **Zinfandel Revisited**

By Robert Blumberg, M.D., Cellar Master and Editor

In non-COVID times my wine tasting group meets once a month on a Friday evening. We vary our themes between new releases and cellar tastings. In the early years of the group, new release tastings dominated, as the group was young and actively looking for wines to drink

or to place in the cellar. Not unexpectedly, these days we have more cellar tastings as we have wines we are curious about or wines we feel need to be drunk up. The topics are chosen the month before based on group interest.

This summer we decided to do a Zinfandel tasting. As I took my place at the table and looked at 8 glasses of mystery Zins I realized I hadn't seriously tasted, or for that matter, thought about Zinfandel in some time. It was not always that way. In my first decade or two of wine appreciation we tasted Zinfandel and consumed Zinfandel regularly. I remember discovering and enjoying great wines from the likes of Louis Martini, Ridge, Joseph Swan, Fetzer, Clos du Val, to name a few. Then wineries started sprouting up in the Sierra Foothills making Zinfandel from old vines in a different, but intriguing style, showing the versatility of the grape. Late harvest Zinfandels with high alcohol and residual sugar further showed nuances of the grape that were interesting, at least in small doses.

But then the pendulum seemed to shift from lighter and balanced wines to universally bigger, heavier, richer, and alcoholic ones, and my interest faded. The commercial success of billions of gallons of white Zinfandel seemed to further cheapen the reputation of the varietal, while at the same time enriching the coffers of the savvy wine marketer.

One of the wines we tasted that July evening was from the Matthiason winery, and as I was looking at their web site to gain information, I found this statement that, to me, says a lot:

*Our goal with this wine was to channel the older California style of Zinfandel that used to be referred to as "California Claret," not the more contemporary "Port" style of Zinfandel that has become synonymous with the variety. The Claret style of Zinfandel was fresher, with crunchy red fruits and prominent acidity.*

I thoroughly enjoyed the tasting, as I think did the others in attendance. Zinfandel again seems to have something of interest to a variety of palate preferences. And its various styles continue to intrigue and mystify my palate. I openly express a preference for lower alcohol bottlings and loved the Matthiason. Yet I also very much enjoyed the Ridge Oltranti at 15.2%. Go figure.

### **Zinfandel**

July 15, 2022

**Ridge Lytton Springs 2009:** Medium garnet with an onion skin edge. Complex nose with briary Zinfandel fruit along with esters of age suggesting a moderately aged wine. This wine is lovely. There is a depth of fruit that is still lively, along with a spiciness and a lingering finish that shows flavor development over time. The wine is balanced and enticing, and is probably at its peak of attractiveness. Medium full in body, with moderate acidity and tannins. Group 1<sup>st</sup> place. My 1<sup>st</sup> place: 25 points.

**Wild Thing Old Vine Zinfandel, Mendocino, Carol Shelton Winery, 2018:** Light garnet color with an orange edge. What an interesting nose with spice cake, allspice, pencil lead, and cranberry components. Medium to medium full in body and tannins, with light medium acidity. There is a jammy fruit component and 14.5% alcohol, but this is carried well and does not intrude on overall balance. Should have mid-term aging potential. Group 2<sup>nd/3rd</sup> place tie. My 3<sup>rd</sup> place: 30 points.

**Decoy 2019 California:** From the new Duckhorn establishment. Light medium garnet with a bright edge. Very nice nose of flowery raspberry jello and cocoa oak. This wine is full of fruit and berries and is very pleasant on the palate. My critique is that it is not that complex. Medium in body, with light medium to medium acidity and tannins. Finish leaves a slightly sweet impression. Well done for what is probably a substantial production wine. Group 2<sup>nd/3rd</sup> place tie. My 5<sup>th</sup> place: 30 points.

**Ridge Oltranti 2018:** From a vineyard in Sonoma County, and containing a small amount of Carignane. Medium garnet with bright edges. Nose is nice combination of fruit (brambly blackberry) and oak (toast and cocoa). This is a ripe and rich wine with above 15% alcohol, yet I liked it a lot. Full bodied, medium acidity, and medium full tannins. A deep and flavorful mouthful, with a sweet finish. Group 4<sup>th</sup> place: My 2<sup>nd</sup> place. 36 points.

**Matthiason Limerick Lane 2016:** Light medium to medium garnet with a violaceous edge. Lovely nose with floral raspberry, crushed violets, and black plums. A wine with glorious fruit. With just 12.8% alcohol it is elegant and balanced, with medium body, acidity, and tannin. A fun and forward wine, though not deep. Perfectly drinkable and enjoyable at present, and given the balance will probably remain so for a while. From a celebrated property along the Russian River. Group 5<sup>th/6th</sup> place tie. My 4<sup>th</sup> place: 41 points.

**Sobon Estate, Rocky Top, Amador County, 2019:** Medium to medium deep garnet. A brooding nose with dark plums and some burnt toast. Sweet and syrupy; port like. Medium full body, light medium acidity, medium tannins. Probably fine with ripe cheeses, though not my style. Group 5<sup>th/6th</sup> place tie. My 7<sup>th</sup> place: 41 points.

**Joseph Swan Sonoma 1982:** Color shows evident age, with orange-amber garnet. Some old style herbaceousness and vegetal components to nose, although not all fruit is gone. On the palate age is readily apparent, although it has not lost all its life. Light medium body with light tannins as much of original tannic component has probably precipitated out in sediment. Medium acidity. Interesting, but well past its prime. Group 7<sup>th</sup> place: My 6<sup>th</sup> place. 57 points.

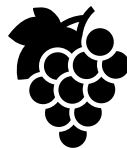
**Calx Primitivo Puglia 2020:** Light orangish garnet color. Fruit candies (think jujubes) in the nose. Jell-O like fruit in a very light bodied, non-serious style of wine. Perhaps well chilled on a picnic. Or for the non-wine drinker at a barbecue. I suspect it is meant to be a fun wine for the drinker, not the thinker, and might be the European ancestor of our white Zinfandel. Group 8<sup>th</sup> place. My 8<sup>th</sup> place: 63 points.



N.B. There were 9 tasters. A unanimous first place wine would have 9 points. A unanimous last place would have 72 points.



The Zinfandel Tasting



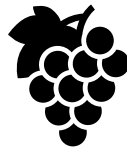
## Welcome New Members

The Society extends a hearty Welcome to the following members who have recently joined:

**Pepper Karansky**, a longtime Bay Area resident with a keen interest in wine and food, had a career in the Presidio Park Service and was introduced to the Society by Dr. Jim Gallagher. Pepper's roots in wine are deep in that her father, a physician, was one of the original shareholders in Heitz Wine Cellars.

**Erin Lamson**, is President and CEO of Adventures in Wine, a global wine import company located in Daly City. Erin was introduced to the Society by Dr. David and Susan Schwartz.

**Russell Lamson**, a professional electrician and home chef works with a Bay Area school district.



### **Donations Are Invited and Appreciated**

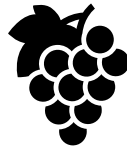
As of October 2022, nearly half of our members have given cash donations to the Society in addition to their annual member dues. These cash donations help to support the costs of operating as a non-profit organization at a point in time when our membership dues do not cover all of our budgeted costs. Your donations *do help* to close the gap between income and operating expense. Checks may be issued to the Society of Medical Friends of Wine. There are several tax-related options for issuing contributions to a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization such as SMFW; please consult with your tax advisor.

Please remember the recently established Susan Guerguy Memorial Fund as you consider your donation. We ask members to contact the Society if you may know of a potential donor friend or associate who would like to make a donation. Contact Board Secretary Susan Schwartz through the society's e-mail (see above), for a donation request letter. All donations received will be acknowledged for the donor's records and in a future newsletter issue as well.

Donations of wine in excellent condition from a member's cellar are always appreciated and can be incorporated into a future wine education event; this helps to defray the overall cost to attendees. These *gifts in kind* are acknowledged with a SMFW donor form for your records. Contact Cellarmaster Dr. Bob Blumberg for details.

Finally, if you or a friend or family member shops through Amazon, please initiate your purchases through the no-cost *Amazon Smile* link on the SMFW website. There is some benefit to the Society.

Thank You for your consideration, and please contact Claire Keiser for additional questions.



## Upcoming Events

### **French Club October 27, 2022**

Please join us for our annual dinner at the beautiful and historic French Club, 414 Mason Street, in San Francisco. We can count on a delicious multi course dinner prepared by chef Lionel Balbastre and outstanding service overseen by Gerant Marcus Garcia. We will start with a sparkling wine courtesy of your Executive Committee, and each attendee is invited to bring a bottle of wine to share with fellow diners in the spirit of the French Club.

### **Cheese and Wine Event with Janet Fletcher December 11, 2022**

Since the date for our dinner event at the French Club had to be postponed to October 27, your Executive Committee has decided to also change the date for our annual Cheese and Wine event to avoid our having two events so close together.

Please make a note on your calendars. The new date will be **Sunday December 11**. The location remains the Mill Valley Community Center, 180 Camino Alto, Mill Valley, CA.

Our theme for this year will be “**America the Beautiful**,” showcasing seven best-in-class cheeses from coast to coast. Our dear friend, noted food writer and cheese expert, Janet Fletcher will lead our exploration, and there will of course be abundant accompanying wines so we can discuss which wines pair best with which cheeses.

The quality of artisan American cheese continues to impress us, but these are challenging times for small domestic producers. Due to current inflation, the cost of milk, feed, packaging

materials, and transportation have significantly increased, while at the same time the strength of the U.S. dollar versus other currencies makes it all that more difficult to compete in price versus imported cheeses.

Our quality small producers need our support, but on your own you could expend considerable time and money doing so to find the very best. Let Janet's palate, knowledge, and experience be your guide, and we anticipate a most enjoyable event.

This is also an excellent occasion to invite your friends as guests to introduce them to your Society's activities. Look for more information and sign-up opportunity as the date approaches.

