

ADASTRA

# THE STARGAZER

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE ADASTRA WINE CLUB

EARLY FALL 2023

In this issue we review your Wine Club selections, the 2021 Adastra Syrah and the 2019 Boundless Optimism Zinfandel, Sonoma Valley. You'll find more information on the Syrah below, please turn to page 3 to learn a little more about the Zinfandel. We have two pairing recipes for you. "Single Skillet Italian Sausage Pasta" on page 4 is a delicious quick-to-make stovetop dish. "Mushroom and Parmesan Pancakes with Béchamel and Cheese Sauces" is a multi-step extravaganza well worth the time and effort. Please see pages 2 and 3 for details of this delicious vegetarian treat. Finally, on page 4, Chris reports from the garden, following up on last year's Stargazer exclusive "Turkeys Plunder Pumpkin Patch" with happier news of "A Secure Pumpkin Patch." We trust you will find something to enjoy. Thank you for your support. Cheers!

*Chris Edwin*

## WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

### 2021 Adastra Syrah *Carneros, Napa Valley*

The 2021 Adastra Syrah is a dark, maroon-colored wine. It has aromas of raspberries, blueberries, cherries, vanilla, cocoa powder and toffee, along with floral notes. The flavors include blueberries, cherries, cocoa powder, red apple, vanilla and a light oaky char. Texturally, this wine is very smooth; it is also fullish in body. Enjoyable now, it will age well for at least the next decade.

2021 was another drought year in California. There was little winter rain and the vines grew slowly. Drought years often mean smaller berries, and this was certainly true at Adastra. There were also fewer clusters than normal and cluster weights were low. Small berries are often prized by winemakers because the skin-to-juice ratio is high, which gives the chance of more concentrated flavors, since not only color, but much of the "flavor" constituents of

grapes come from the skins. However, small berries, low berry numbers per cluster and lower cluster numbers per vine led to lower than desirable yields, with just 1.1 tons per acre of fruit coming from the Syrah, which is easily capable of producing 4 tons per acre in a more reasonable year.

Focusing on the positive, we allowed the fruit to hang on the vine until October 18 before harvesting. This resulted in some delicious, ripe flavors. The wine was pressed into two plastic "S" bins and fermented to dryness. At that point, the bins were sealed for a period of anaerobic extended maceration. On December 6, some 49 days after harvest, the wine was pressed off, settled in tanks overnight, then racked to two new French oak barrels. Aged for 19 months without being moved, the wine was racked to a tank prior to bottling on July 24. At present, the wine benefits from decanting, but it is certainly very pleasant currently and will continue to improve for years to come.

#### 2021 Adastra Syrah—Just the Facts

**Grapes:** Syrah clone 470 from two vineyard blocks "Syrah Nuevo" budded in 2014, "Syrah Viejo" budded in 2004.

**Yield (tons per acre):** 1.1 tpa

**Harvest Date:** October 18, 2021

**Bottling Date:** July 24, 2023

**pH:** 3.66 **TA:** 4.6 g/L

**Alcohol:** 14.6% by volume

**Barrel Aging:** 19 months in oak

**Barrels:** 100% French oak (100% new oak)

**Cooperage:** Ermitage, François Frères

**Production:** 50 cases

**When Best to Drink:** Now through 2035

**NOTE:** We chose not to put capsules on the 2021 Adastra Syrah.

**Additional Notes:** 49-day extended maceration.



**PAIRING RECIPE #1:****MUSHROOM & PARMESAN PANCAKES WITH BÉCHAMEL & CHEESE SAUCES**

This is a multi-step recipe which requires some time to make, but tastes wonderful. Read through the recipe first, so you can be optimally organized. First, make pancake batter and a double batch of Béchamel sauce — half for the filling, half for the topping of cheese sauce. Then prepare the pancake filling, make the pancakes themselves, and stuff and bake them. While they're in the oven, finish making the cheese sauce.

**6 Servings**      **Time: Allow 90 Minutes**

**Pancakes**

2 Tablespoons	Unsalted butter
4 ounces	Whole wheat (or all-purpose) flour
1	Large egg
1	Large egg yolk
1 and 1/2 cups	Milk

**Béchamel Sauce**

2 and 1/2 cups	Milk
1/2	Onion
2	Bay leaves
4 cloves	Garlic
2 Tablespoons	Unsalted butter
2 Tablespoons	All-purpose flour (or use whole wheat)
Salt and pepper	To taste

**Filling**

2 Tablespoons	Butter
1	Large onion, peeled and chopped
2 cloves	Garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
3/4 pound	Mushrooms
1 teaspoon	Herbes de Provence
1/4 cup	2019 Boundless Optimism Zinfandel
1 and 1/4 cups	Béchamel Sauce
1/4 pound	Parmesan cheese
1/3 cup	Heavy whipped cream

**Cheese Sauce**

1 and 1/4 cups	Your béchamel sauce
4 Tablespoons	Cheddar cheese

**Part I. Make the Pancake Batter**

1. Melt the butter in a small pan and set aside to cool.
2. Add the flour to a large mixing bowl and scoop a well in the center.
3. Add the egg and egg yolk to the well.
4. Add the milk, whisking gently until integrated.
5. Add the melted butter, integrating that too.
6. Set this batter aside for about 40 minutes while you make the sauce.

**Part II. Make the Béchamel Sauce**

1. Place the milk, onion, bay leaves and cloves of garlic in a small saucepan and warm over a very low heat for fifteen minutes.
2. Remove from the heat. Remove the onion, bay leaves, and cloves of garlic.
3. Melt the butter in a medium sized saucepan, again over low heat.
4. When the butter has melted, gradually stir in the flour. Cook the combination (known as "roux") for two to three minutes over medium-low heat until the roux becomes fragrant, but does not brown.
5. Remove from heat and allow to cool for a minute.
6. Still off the heat, slowly whisk in the milk. Return to the heat (set at low) and slowly bring to a simmer, stirring often to avoid lumps. It's best to avoid boiling. After eight to 10 minutes, the sauce should have the consistency of cream soup.
7. Add salt and pepper if desired and you've done it. Set half the sauce aside to make cheese sauce later.

**Part III. Make the Mushroom Filling**

1. With the ingredients sliced and weighed, melt the butter in a deep pan.
2. Add the onion and garlic and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the onion becomes soft and lightly golden.
3. Stir in the mushrooms. Add some more butter or olive oil if the mixture seems too dry. Cook until the mushrooms are just done (soft and dark).
4. Stir in the herbs, then add the quarter cup Boundless Optimism Zinfandel. Allow to bubble for two minutes until it is absorbed. Stir occasionally to prevent any sticking.
5. Add the Béchamel and parmesan.
6. Taste for saltiness. Add salt and pepper to taste.

**Part IV. Make the Pancakes**

1. If you have a purpose-built pancake or crepe pan, put it to use. Otherwise, a heavy skillet will do. Melt a small amount of butter in the pan.
2. Give the batter a quick stir. A quarter-cup of batter will make a good-sized pancake suitable for stuffing.
3. Add the batter to the pan and cook until the underside is easy to separate from the surface with a spatula or palette knife. Flip the pancake gently over to cook the other side. This second side will probably take just one minute. When the pancake is done, move it carefully to a plate.
4. Add more butter to the pan. Use the first pancake as a model to gauge whether to add more, less or the same volume of batter to the pan. Proceed until all the batter is used. You should have a stack of pancakes.

**Part V. Fill and Bake the Pancakes**

1. Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Lightly grease a baking pan or casserole dish. Place a pancake in the chosen vessel, spoon some mushroom mix into the pancake middle and roll closed. Repeat until the pancakes are filled. Space them evenly in the pan.
3. Add the cream around the edges of the pancakes.
4. If desired, add some grated parmesan cheese to the top of each pancake.
5. Add the pancakes and bake for 20 minutes. The cream should be bubbling and the cheese melted.

**Part VI. Make the Cheese Sauce**

1. While the pancakes are baking, gently heat the set-aside Béchamel sauce.
2. Add the cheese and stir until melted and integrated.
3. Flavor with salt and pepper as desired.

**Part VII. Finally ... Plate, Pair, and Enjoy**

1. Remove pancakes from the oven. Arrange on plates.
2. Spoon cheese sauce over each pancake.
3. Enjoy with 2019 Boundless Optimism Zinfandel or 2021 Aadastra Syrah. (We've also enjoyed this recipe with N'Oak and Boundless Optimism Rosé.)

Note: Béchamel Sauce was named for seventeenth century French financier Louis de Béchameil. It is also known as "White Sauce." If you don't like either option, perhaps consider renaming your sauce after your favorite Secretary of the Treasury or Federal Reserve Chair.

**WHAT'S IN THE BOX?****2019 Boundless Optimism Zinfandel *Sonoma Valley***

The 2019 Boundless Optimism Zinfandel is deep garnet in color with aromas of red apples, plums, black licorice, chocolate and spice.

On the palate the wine is soft, smooth and generous with plummy, jammy flavors, and hints of pepper and chocolate.

Aged in neutral oak barrels for forty-five months, this is a one-off project for us that we hope you will enjoy.

**2019 Boundless Optimism Zinfandel, Sonoma Valley — Just the Facts**

**Grapes:** Zinfandel from the heart of Sonoma Valley

**Estimated Yield (tons per acre):** 3.0 tpa

**Harvest Date:** October 2019

**Bottling Date:** July 24, 2023

**pH:** 4.0 **TA:** 5.5 g/L

**Alcohol:** 16.1% alcohol by volume

**Barrel Aging:** c. 45 months in neutral oak barrels

**Barrels:** French and American oak

**Cooperage:** Various

**Production:** 99 cases

**When Best to Drink:** Now through 2030

## PAIRING RECIPE #2: SINGLE-SKILLET ITALIAN SAUSAGE PASTA

Adapted from [www.readyseteat.com](http://www.readyseteat.com)

6 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes    Cooking Time: 20 minutes

### Ingredients

3/4 pound	Italian sausage meat	8 ounces	Whole wheat penne pasta (uncooked)
1 and 1/4 cup	Water	1/4 cup	Parmesan cheese, coarsely grated
14.5 oz can	Tomatoes (no flavoring)	1/4 teaspoon	Oregano
3 ounces	Tomato paste	1/4 teaspoon	Thyme
Salt and pepper	To taste		

1. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat.
2. Add sausage meat, breaking it up with a spatula or spoon. Cook for 5 minutes.
3. Carefully drain off any excess fat.
4. Add the water, tomatoes, tomato paste and pasta to the meat in the skillet. Stir to combine.
5. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat and cook until pasta is done to your liking (probably about 15 minutes).
6. Five minutes into the above, stir in the Oregano and Thyme.
7. Ten minutes in, add most of the Parmesan and stir in.
8. Serve, garnishing with the remaining Parmesan.
9. Enjoy with 2021 Adastra Syrah, with lettuce or cucumber if so desired.



## A SECURE PUMPKIN PATCH



On July 15, 2023, some local friends and their children gathered at Adastra to plant seeds for pumpkins grown in our garden. Watered by drip lines with emitters placed at seed mounds, healthy plants and early fruits (pumpkins are classified as fruits) are growing vigorously.

Atlantic Giant, Big Max, and Wyatt's Wonder are types we have that potentially could produce a 200 – 300lb single specimen. Mid-size types this year are Cinderella, Connecticut Field, Jack O'Lantern, and Lumina (white). The smallest are our Jack Be Little, usually less than six inches in diameter, but great for holiday decorating.

Having experienced plant and fruit losses in the past from wild turkeys and ground squirrels, the entire pumpkin patch has been covered in small mesh netting suspended with posts and wires at a level of about five feet, allowing room for gardeners to move in the patch. The mesh is large enough for bees to get in and pollinate the plants. Some cross-pollination between varieties may occur too, resulting in fruit that has interesting and unique qualities. We expect the pumpkins to be ready to harvest some 100 or so days after planting, just in time for Halloween.