

# THE STARGAZER

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE ADASTRA WINE CLUB

SPRING 2024

In this issue we review the main Spring Wine Club selections, the 2022 Adastra Pinot Noir, the 2022 Adastra Chardonnay and the latest Adastra Merlot, a marriage of the 2021 and 2022 Adastra Merlot harvests. You should have at least one of these wines in your allocation! General discussion of the 2022 vintage takes place on this page within the description of the Pinot Noir. On page 3 you will find a tasty recipe for Spicy Lamb Pie. This impressive dish tastes very good with all the wines featured in this *Stargazer*. **Thank you for your support. Cheers!**

*Chris Edwin*

## WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

### 2022 Adastra Pinot Noir

#### *Carneros, Napa Valley*

The 2022 Adastra Pinot Noir is a garnet-colored wine. Intense and smooth-textured, it has floral, fruit, earthy, and spice elements. In addition to light strawberry fruit, there is a pleasing, earthy intensity to the palate, with notes of sassafras, bran, black tea, soy, sassafras and a rootiness; it has an intense and persistent finish. A wine of character and place, it will reward aging, but can be enjoyed now. Made from certified organic grapes from Adastra's vineyard.

2022 was very much a drought year in our part of the world. The growing season began fairly dry. An advantage: we were able to mow the vineyard before budbreak; some years, such as 2024, it is too wet to do this without risk of getting the tractor stuck. Lowering the level of the grass allows cool air to sink to the vineyard floor, meaning the air around the buds is slightly warmer than the coldest air. This lessens the risk of frost damage.

By early April, 2022 all grape varieties in the vineyard were showing leaves, with the Chardonnay the most advanced.. Much of the time the weather wasn't that warm, although there were forays above 90° Fahrenheit in all months through September from May onwards. However, September 3rd through 9th saw a prolonged hot spell, peaking on September 5th with 105° Fahrenheit recorded in the shade of the barn. Because the grapes were dry-farmed this year, they were somewhat buffered against the heat. However, it was clear by September 9th that the Pinot Noir had had enough, so we harvested that night.

At the winery, we destemmed about 60 percent of the clusters, leaving the remaining 40 percent as whole clusters. In order to release juice from the berries, Edwin stomped gently in the two bins for about 10 minutes each to break up the grapes to release juice to ferment (see pictures). The grapes fermented of their own accord via wild yeast. At around zero degrees brix,



*While stomping on the 2022 Pinot Noir to coax juice from the berries, Edwin adds to his catalog of "not quite" selfies.*

#### 2022 Adastra Pinot Noir—Just the Facts

**Grapes:** Adastra Vineyard Pinot Noir: Pommard, Dijon 115, 777, and a few clusters of DRC, Dijon 113 and Wadenswil.

**Yield (tons per acre):** 1.27 tpa

**Harvest Date:** September 10, 2022

**Bottling Date:** March 26, 2024

**pH:** 3.68 **TA:** 4.1g/L

**Alcohol:** 14.9% by volume

**Barrel Aging:** 15.5 months in oak, 5 weeks in tank.

**Barrels:** 100% French oak (66% new oak)

**Cooperage:** Dargaud-Jaegle, Montgillard, Remond

**Production:** 81cases

**When Best to Drink:** Now through 2037

**NOTE:** We chose not to put capsules on the

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**What's in the Box?** *continued from page 1*

the bins were sealed against the air to allow a period of extended maceration without risk of damage from, for example, vinegar-making acetobacter, which require oxygen to do their work. The use of whole clusters and the extended maceration help to give our Pinot Noirs a certain earthiness/ rootiness which we think emphasizes the distinctiveness of our wines.

46 days after harvest, the juice in the bins was racked to barrel and the what remained of the clusters and berries, pressed and then sent to barrel. We employed a total of three French oak barrels, two of which were new.

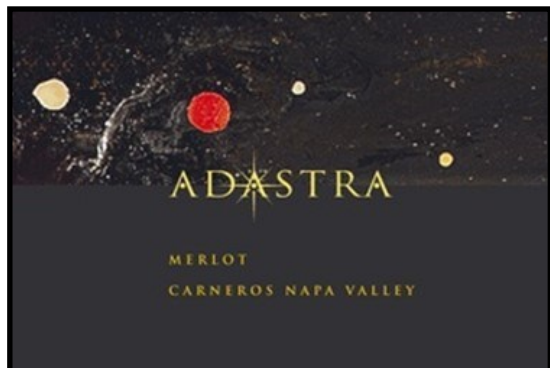
The wines were bottled on March 26, 2024. While the wine will certainly benefit from aging and will continue to improve for at least the next decade, the 2022 Adastra Pinot Noir is enjoyable now, particularly with Spicy Lamb Pie (see next page) as well as the following (tested) cheeses: Sharp Cheddar, St. André, Parmesan, and Double Gloucester.

**WHAT'S IN THE BOX?****2022 Adastra Merlot *Carneros, Napa Valley, non-vintage***

This Merlot combines Adastra Merlot from two low-yielding years: 2021 and 2022 into a single wine. While it's permissible to add up to 5% of wine from another vintage and still be a "vintage wine" ("2021," "2022," etc.). This wine is approximately one third 2021 and two thirds 2022 Adastra Merlot, hence the non-vintage designation.

Yields in 2021 were so low that we didn't even have enough wine for one barrel. As a consequence, the wine was aged in kegs, following an extended maceration in a bin. The result was a beautifully pure, fruity wine, but the volume would have made about ten cases. Early trials blending the 2021 with the 2022 Merlot were not encouraging, but eventually the wines harmonized. The 2022 was aged in a single new French oak Taransaud barrel, so the final wine is one third stainless steel, one third new oak.

Brilliant ruby red in color, the wine's many aromas include cherries, plums, and raspberry jam., with hints of toasted bread, figs, roses, molasses, black tea and cumin. Gentle and smooth on the palate, the wine melds fruit, chocolate, spice and savory characters. Soft, velvety tannins and a persistent, lightly fruity finish make this a very pleasant wine now or over the next decade. Cheese pairing? Try Reyes Point Blue!



*Feet in Pinot Noir berries, owner's view.*

Before entering the bin, the feet are washed with water and then sprayed with alcohol rendering them thoroughly clean.

The grapes feel soft, and, because they are harvested at night, cold. Stems can be scratchy/ticklish.

**Adastra Merlot NV – Just the Facts**

**Grapes:** Adastra Merlot clone 6

**Yield (tons per acre) 2021:** 0.7; 2022: 1.29 tpa

**Harvest Dates:** October 13, 2021 and September 29, 2022

**Bottling Date:** March 27, 2024

**pH:** 3.51 **TA:** 5.4g/L

**Alcohol:** 14.2% by volume

**Aging 2021 Vintage:** 26 months in stainless steel

**Aging 2022 Vintage:** 15 months in oak

**Combined Aging in Stainless Steel:** 46 days

**Cooperage 2022:** Taransaud (one new French oak barrel, so 100% new French oak)

**Composition:** Approximately one third 2021 and two thirds 2022.

**Production:** 39 cases

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

**PAIRING RECIPE: SPICY LAMB PIE***Recipe adapted from The River Cottage Family Cookbook*

- A delicious, versatile pie that pairs very well with our 2022 Adastra Pinot Noir and or 2022 Adastra Chardonnay (and with many of our other wines too).
- This is a very rewarding recipe, but it does take time. If you are an expert pie maker, you may be able reduce the pie preparation time. Our novice pie maker took 25 minutes to prepare the pastry by hand.
- That said, there is something very satisfying about serving a well-made, home-made pie.

**Time to Cook Ingredients:** About 48 minutes**Pie Cooking Time:** about 35 minutes**Time to Table:** About 2.5 hours**Serves 6****Pastry Ingredients**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 3/4 cup         | Unsalted Butter                            |
| 2 1/4 cups      | All-Purpose Flour                          |
| c. 1 tablespoon | All-Purpose Flour to dust the work surface |
| Pinch           | Salt                                       |
| 3-4 tablespoons | Water                                      |

**Pastry Part 1**

1. Cut the butter up into little cubes.
2. Sift flour into a mixing bowl.
3. Add the salt and butter.
4. Rub butter into flour using your fingertips, slowly breaking down the cubes of butter until the mixture resembles bread crumbs.
5. Add 3 tablespoons water to start and gently knead the mixture. You want a firm, unsticky dough; you may need to add more water.
6. Divide the dough in half. Place each half in a plastic bag (or wrap each half with plastic wrap) and put in the fridge.

**Pie Filling**

1. Peel the onion and garlic, then chop them finely, keeping them separate.
2. Heat the olive oil in the frying pan. Add the onion and fry over a low heat until the onion is lightly golden and just beginning to soften (about 12 minutes).
3. Stir in the garlic and fry for another two minutes.
4. Add the ground lamb, breaking it up with a spoon as you do. Turn up the heat to medium plus to brown the meat so it no longer looks raw.
5. Stir in the cinnamon, cumin, and cloves.
6. Add the salt, pepper and canned tomatoes. Stir well.
7. Bring the mixture to a simmer then turn the heat to low and simmer for half an hour, stirring occasionally, until you have a thick, meaty sauce. At that point, turn off the heat.
8. Remove tough stalks from the parsley, then chop and add to the meaty mixture.
9. Allow to cool while you roll out the pastry.

**Pie Filling Ingredients**

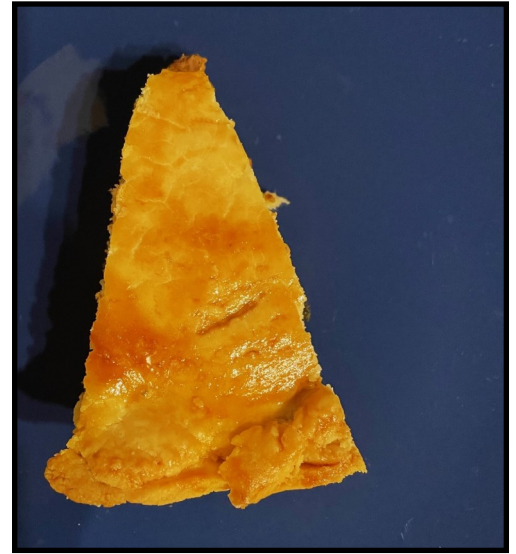
- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1                  | Medium onion        |
| 2                  | Garlic cloves       |
| 2 tablespoons      | Olive oil           |
| 1lb                | Ground lamb         |
| 1/2 teaspoon       | Ground cinnamon     |
| 1/2 teaspoon       | Ground cumin        |
| Up to 1/4 teaspoon | Ground cloves       |
| 14 ounces          | Canned tomatoes     |
| 1/4 cup            | Parsley (flat leaf) |
| 1                  | egg                 |
| 1/2 teaspoon       | Salt                |
| To taste           | Pepper              |

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**PAIRING RECIPE: SPICY LAMB PIE****Pastry Part 2**

1. Pre-heat the oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Place a baking sheet in the oven to heat it. Lightly grease a 10 inch pie plate.
2. Sprinkle the c. 1 tablespoon of flour onto the work surface and a little on the rolling pin.
3. Take one half of the pastry from the fridge, remove from wrapping and start to gently, but firmly roll out the pastry. Roll away from yourself only. Turn the pastry after every two or three rolls to prevent sticking and to create a rough circle.
4. When the pastry circle is slightly bigger than the pie plate, roll it up on the rolling pin and drop into the pie plate (or just lift it into the pie plate).
5. Roll out the second half of the pastry in the same manner (except don't put it in the pie plate).
6. Spoon filling onto the pastry you've just place in the pie plate.
7. Break the egg into a small bowl and beat lightly with fork. Brush a little of the egg around the edges of the pastry in the pie plate.
8. Roll up the second half of the pastry onto the rolling pin and cover the pie.
9. Trim the sides and then pinch together to make a wavy edge.
10. If you do not have a pie funnel on your pie plate, cut a quarter-sized hole in the center of the top crust.
11. Brush more of the egg around the pie. Use any pastry trimmings to decorate the top/ patch any holes.
12. Brush the surface of the pie with the remainder of the egg.
13. Place the pie on the pre-heated baking sheet. Bake for about thirty-five minutes, until the pastry is golden brown.
14. Enjoy with 2022 Adastra Pinot Noir, perhaps also with a salad. The pie also goes well with the 2022 Adastra Chardonnay and the 2022 N'Oak Chardonnay. With the NV Merlot—the pairing is more of a counterpoint,

**WHAT'S IN THE BOX? 2022 Adastra Chardonnay *Carneros, Napa Valley***

The 2022 Adastra Chardonnay has an attractive gold color. Its subtle aromas include apple, peaches, vanilla, golden syrup and pie dough. Medium in body, the wine's flavors include citrus, apple, fig, honey, marmalade, oak, and a mineral quality; it is smooth with a persistent, citrus-framed finish.

Heat in early September 2022 helped concentrate flavors. The grapes were harvested on September 17, whole cluster pressed and then cold-settled for 48 hours. The juice was next racked to French oak barrels for fermentation; one third of the oak was new.

Once the wines had fermented to dryness, they were occasionally stirred on the lees, otherwise they were left in peace for sixteen months to accumulate flavor. They were then racked to a stainless steel tank for 44 days prior to bottling on March 25, 2024.

The 2022 Adastra Chardonnay goes very well with the Spicy Lamb pie and brings out the best in most cheeses. Enjoy.

**2022 Adastra Chardonnay—Just the Facts**

**Grapes:** Adastra Vineyard Chardonnay: Old Wente, Dijon 96, Dijon 76

**Yield (tons per acre):** 0.65 tpa

**Harvest Date:** September 17, 2022

**Bottling Date:** March 25, 2024

**pH:** 3.46 **TA:** 5.6g/L

**Alcohol:** 14.9% by volume

**Barrel Aging:** 16 months in oak, 44 days in tank.

**Barrels:** 100% French oak (37% new oak)

**Cooperage:** François Frères, Tonnellerie Ô

**Production:** 70 cases

**When Best to Drink:** Now through 2029

**NOTE:** We chose not to put capsules on the 2022 Adastra Chardonnay.