

I sincerely hope that everyone had a safe and enjoyable Fourth of July. I had a safe holiday because I stayed at home and experienced a new wine that I discovered from Kenwood Vineyards. It is called Six Ridges and was released to the market about 18 months ago.

Through this wine, Winemaker Pat Henderson has captured the unique character of Sonoma County's best wine regions. Kenwood named the wine in honor of the mountains and ridges that border the Kenwood Vineyard. Mr. Henderson further enhances the series by selecting the top vineyards and best varietals in Alexander Valley, Dry Creek, Russian River Valley, Sonoma Valley and Sonoma Coast, to ensure that each wine is the ultimate expression of the variety and terroir. Each lot is picked, fermented and aged separately to preserve the unique flavors of the vineyard (terroir) before they are brought together and purposefully blended. When ready for bottling, the blended wines are bottled and labeled under the umbrella name of Six Ridges. The wines are: Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, Dry Creek Valley Merlot, Sonoma Coast Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley Chardonnay and Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

Are there other wines at Kenwood? Yes, there are. There is the Artist Series and the Jack London Series. For more than three decades the Artist Series has reflected the ultimate expression of Artistry and fine winemaking by blending the finest Cabernet Sauvignon from the very best vineyards in Sonoma. In addition to this, the Artistry Wines usually are in the collectable category. These spectacular wines are also age worthy, reflecting richly layered fruit, integrated oak and a polished texture. Notice that the Artist Series uses Cabernet Sauvignon only.

Since 1976 Kenwood Vineyards has been the exclusive producer of wines from the historic lava terraced vineyards of the famous Jack London Ranch. Jack London was a pioneer of sustainable farming in Sonoma Valley. Today his family continues to practice sustainable farming on the estate producing Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sarah and Zinfandel. The superb quality of these limited production wines has made them among the most successful single-vineyard series in California.

How does all of this come about? Let's take a look. The Kenwood Philosophy on making wine incorporates the belief that Small-lot winemaking is the best way to get the most out of Sonoma County fruit. It means that they pick, ferment and age each of their lots separately. This preserves the uniqueness throughout the winemaking process and gives the winemaker total control to craft the optimal blend. Getting further into the small-lot method; Kenwood has more

than 150 individual lots that they ferment in 125 small stainless steel tanks, so it is no small task to treat each separately. Each tank is tasted daily. In addition to this, there are 12,000 small oak barrels that do the rest for the small-lot winemaking process, thus ensuring a distinct barrel-aging regimen that integrates the oak into the wine in harmony with the flavors from the vineyard. The numbers presented herein of tanks and barrels reflects a dedication and passion to the winemaking process that will not be compromised. Just consider one aspect: the cost of the tanks and barrels. In plain English, they ain't cheap.

Kenwood has built strong relationships with some of the best and longest standing growers in the region. The growers know exactly what flavor profile Kenwood desires. During the growing season there are regular visits to the vineyards that Kenwood is working with to ensure that the fruit is developing properly.

Kenwood is following the all-important sustainable wine growing practices. This allows them to continue the tradition of quality winemaking for generations to come. By adhering to the principles of sustainability as they relate to winemaking, they are reducing waste, and yielding lower energy consumption. The viticulture team has certified all of their Estate Vineyards under the California Sustainable Wine growing Program. They are also working with their grower partners to have 100% of their Sonoma County Growers certified sustainable by the year 2019.

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Going forward, the word that will always creep into my mind when I write or speak about Kenwood is "prolific." Some would look at their product lineup and think "logistical nightmare," while others might look upon it with the utmost respect and admiration. I am sort of in between. Not only has Kenwood succeeded in producing the three series that I highlighted above, they have also succeeded in producing three more series - all because of the ability to produce in Small Lots.

We are fortunate here in the Lowcountry. I checked on the availability of Kenwood wines for Beaufort and Hilton Head. Southern Wine and Spirits is the distributor for Kenwood and retail coverage is very good. Hope that you have a chance to try some. In most cases the wines are affordable.

Cheers!