



April 2015

Dear Wine Club Member:

We have taken a slightly different approach with our spring Club Selection by presenting you with a vertical set of Syrahs in order to further your wine experiences and education:

### **2008, 2009, 2010 Montemaggiore Paolo's Vineyard Syrah**

All three wines are ready to drink right now, but each is a slightly different age and reflects the weather variation that makes artisan wines so intriguing and beguiling. Along with your wines, you will find an Information Chart outlining the commonalities and differences in the vineyard, winemaking, and wines. If you have a chance to taste the wines together, the chart will help you recognize the common "terroir" of Montemaggiore while simultaneously identifying vintage variations. We thought the vertical would be an interesting twist on our usual Club Selection because many of you are either new to the Wine Club or don't have a chance to cellar Montemaggiore wines.

Wine made from grapes evokes so much more passion than wine made from other fruits (e.g., apples, pomegranates) because grapes are so sensitive to the environment around them. Wine made from apples grown in New York versus Sonoma County, in 2008 versus 2009, would not taste very different. On the other hand, grapes are very sensitive to the soils, the elevation, the general climate of a vineyard—and they are also sensitive to the weather that Mother Nature presents each year. This is why a Montemaggiore Syrah will always taste different than a Syrah from a neighboring vineyard. And this is what makes vertical tastings fun and educational—identifying the commonalities and celebrating the differences between vintages. We hope you enjoy the learning experience embodied in this Wine Club Selection.

**Be sure to look for your surprise:** Before getting into the wines, we want to point out that we added a surprise to your package: world's best cloth for drying wine glasses! We recently discovered this "miraculous" microfiber cloth, and we just had to share it with you (and no, this is not an advertisement). Your wine glasses will be dry and sparkling with one swipe of the cloth—and you won't waste time trying to get rid of lint or streaks. While sparkling glasses may not make the wine taste better, they definitely make an occasion more memorable.

At Montemaggiore, we probably spend more time cleaning glasses than most (and Lise is definitely more picky about sparkle than most)—so you might think that our excitement over this cloth is a bit inappropriate and bizarre. But we predict that you will really appreciate the ease of cleaning wine glasses with this cloth—likewise, be warned that it will "ruin" all other dishtowels for you. Even if you aren't going to drink your Club wines right away, be sure to take the cloth out and start using it. And please ignore the unfortunate name of the product: Wubeez).

**Comparing the 2008, 2009, and 2010 Vintages:** So now we focus on the important business of Montemaggiore Syrahs. All three wines are excellent examples of classic Montemaggiore vintages. Nothing went drastically wrong during the growing season (see Montemaggiore's Blog "[What makes a great Vintage?](#)"), so they are a really good expression of our vineyards, of our *terroir*. None of these vintages represents an anomaly, thus by tasting all three together, the special nature of Montemaggiore Syrah may be more obvious.

In tasting these wines, we think you'll find them to be very similar in the following ways:

- Aromas of black fruits, pepper, earth, herbs, minerals, and meat—all mimicked in the flavors on your palate
- Smooth, silky texture with full, rich mouthfeel due to the fine tannin structure
- Good balance between all the flavors (no single element like oak, alcohol, or acidity seems to dominate).
- Medium-long finish that leaves a pleasing taste in your mouth

While the above could be a somewhat generic description of good Syrah, there are several aspects that set Montemaggiore Syrahs apart:

- Balance of fruit with earth/herbs/meat. Our moderate climate means that we have the best of both Syrah worlds: the cherry, blackberry, and pepper typically found in warmer climate Syrahs along with the earthy, meaty, herbal flavors found in cool climate Syrahs.
- Minerality. While the stone and gravel notes appear more in the nose than the palate of Montemaggiore Syrahs, the “rocky” nature of our mountainside vineyard shines through in all our wines.
- Vibrancy and vitality. Montemaggiore wines come alive in your mouth. Their changing, beguiling, complex nature is probably due to the lean, schist soils of the vineyard along with our organic and biodynamic practices.
- Oak is in the background. Some wines are aged in high percentages of new oak barrels thus vanilla and wood flavors predominate (which masks other flavors, some of which may be flaws). Lise really wants Vincent’s (and Mother Nature’s) excellent work in the vineyard to stand out—thus she uses relatively little new oak.

**Contrasting the 2008, 2009, and 2010 Vintages:** While these three Syrahs undoubtedly have more commonalities than differences, their distinctions can be attributed either to differing ages or to weather variations during the growing season. The Montemaggiore Information Chart included in your package outlines the fundamental differences in the growing season and the wines. The backside of the chart provides a structure for your Personal Tasting Notes to help you highlight commonalities and differences. What you taste is most important, but here’s what we notice as the differences in the vintages (along with our speculation as to why):

- 2008: the smoothest and silkiest of the three (older age); a bit more earthy and less fruit-forward (age); more anise and pepper (heat at harvest); formidable structure and tannins (lower yields)
- 2009: more ripe, dark fruit (ideal growing season); slightly more elegant and brighter than the others (slightly larger yields); more nutmeg and other spices (oak)
- 2010: more minerality and less pepper (cooler season); a bit rougher in texture than the others (young age); vanilla cream aroma (oak, prominence due to younger age)

You should know that as any wine ages, it generally loses its fruit and gains complexity in the nose and on the palate. The brashness and boldness of youth gives way to a smoother and softer texture. You may have a preference older wines or younger wines—but there is no single “right” answer.

**Host a Vertical Tasting:** While you can certainly appreciate these three wines individually and on your own, it’s often illuminating to taste them all together and with other people. Others might identify different aromas and flavors than you sense but either didn’t initially notice or can’t quite put into words. And inviting more people means that you can open more wines—always a good idea if you like tasting different wines as much as we do! Additional tips on hosting a Vertical Tasting along with additional tasting sheets, can be found on our blog ([“Hosting a Vertical Tasting”](#)).

Not all wines are the basis for an interesting vertical tasting, only vineyard-based wines. In general, wines can be divided into winemaker-based wine and vineyard-based wines. The primary goal of a winemaker based wine is to maintain the “house” style. The winemaker plays a significant role in shaping the wine so that it tastes the same year after year. With a vineyard-based wine, the winemaker is really just trying to highlight what that vineyard has to say in that particular vintage, thus there will probably be significant vintages variation over the years.

The major question when hosting a vertical tasting is whether to start with the oldest wine or the youngest wine. There are advantages and disadvantages to both:

- Tasting wines oldest to youngest allows one’s palate to be most sensitive to all the subtleties and nuances of a well-aged wine tasted while your palate is fresh. As the wines continue the chronology and decrease in age, they will increase in alcohol, acidity, and tannin, all of which will fatigue your palate.
- Most verticals go from younger to older, however, because this follows a wine’s evolution as it gains bottle age, which can be fascinating. When you taste in this order, your palate moves from the more simple wines to more complex wines which can seem more natural.

Enjoy your 2008-2010 Syrahs along with any other wines you’ve chosen for your Spring Wine Club Selection. Salute (*sa LOO tay*, or “cheers” as we say in Italian)! Your next Club Selection comes in October/November, but we hope that in the meantime, you can come by to say hello to us in Healdsburg. Thank you for your support,



2010 Syrah	2009 Syrah	2008 Syrah	Commonality
<p><b>See</b></p> <p>Color: </p> <p><b>Sniff</b></p> <p>Aromas: </p> <p>Intensity: </p> <p><b>Sip</b></p> <p>Flavors: </p> <p>Intensity: </p> <p>Acidity: </p> <p>Body: </p> <p>Texture: </p> <p>Alcohol: </p> <p>Finish: </p> <p><b>Summarize</b></p> <p>Balance: </p> <p>Preference: </p>	<p><b>See</b></p> <p>Color: </p> <p><b>Sniff</b></p> <p>Aromas: </p> <p>Intensity: </p> <p><b>Sip</b></p> <p>Flavors: </p> <p>Intensity: </p> <p>Acidity: </p> <p>Body: </p> <p>Texture: </p> <p>Alcohol: </p> <p>Finish: </p> <p><b>Summarize</b></p> <p>Balance: </p> <p>Preference: </p>	<p><b>See</b></p> <p>Color: </p> <p><b>Sniff</b></p> <p>Aromas: </p> <p>Intensity: </p> <p><b>Sip</b></p> <p>Flavors: </p> <p>Intensity: </p> <p>Acidity: </p> <p>Body: </p> <p>Texture: </p> <p>Alcohol: </p> <p>Finish: </p> <p><b>Summarize</b></p> <p>Balance: </p> <p>Preference: </p>	<p><b>See</b></p> <p>Color:</p> <p><b>Sniff</b></p> <p>Aroma:</p> <p>Intensity:</p> <p><b>Sip</b></p> <p>Flavors:</p> <p>Intensity:</p> <p>Acidity:</p> <p>Body:</p> <p>Texture:</p> <p>Alcohol:</p> <p>Finish:</p> <p><b>Summarize</b></p> <p>Balance:</p>

## Aromas – Flavors

**Citrus:** grapefruit lemon lime mandarin orange peel

**Tropical:** melon pineapple passionfruit lychee banana

**Floral:** honeysuckle orange blossom jasmine violets

**Vegetal:** green pepper grass mint tobacco hay olive asparagus

**Mineral:** flint stone diesel kerosene tar wet cement

**Spice:** clove nutmeg cinnamon pepper vanilla anise

**Berry:** currant strawberry plum blueberry cherry blackberry

**Nut:** almond hazelnut coconut

**Wood:** pine cedar oak smoke toast earthy leather coffee

**Caramel:** buttery honey cocoa chocolate molasses



# Information Chart

<b>2010 Montemaggiore Syrah</b>	<b>2009 Montemaggiore Syrah</b>	<b>2008 Montemaggiore Syrah</b>	<b>Commonalities</b>
<p><b>Growing Season</b></p> <p><b>Overall:</b> cool but with average yields</p> <p><b>Spring:</b> cold and wet leading to late bud break. Decent fruit set.</p> <p><b>Summer:</b> unusually cool, 5-10°F below normal. Heat spikes in Aug and Sept but we were unaffected.</p> <p><b>Harvest:</b> a bit late, very compact timeframe because all grapes were ripe at same time. Average yields.</p>	<p><b>Growing Season</b></p> <p><b>Overall:</b> picture-perfect with somewhat increased yields</p> <p><b>Spring:</b> dry and mild, thus excellent pollination and fruit set.</p> <p><b>Summer:</b> warm, but not too hot</p> <p><b>Harvest:</b> on-time start, compact due to impending rain, which we avoided. Good yields.</p>	<p><b>Growing Season</b></p> <p><b>Overall:</b> somewhat difficult and low-yielding</p> <p><b>Spring:</b> very dry, bud break two weeks early. Hot spells with large temperature swings thus poor pollination and fruit set.</p> <p><b>Summer:</b> mild but with hot spells in August.</p> <p><b>Harvest:</b> very early start, regular length, early finish. No rain. Exceptionally small berries and low yields.</p>	<p><b>Producer:</b> Montemaggiore <b>Winemaker:</b> Lise Ciolino <b>Winegrower:</b> Vincent Ciolino <b>Wine:</b> Paolo's Vineyard Syrah <b>Blend:</b> 100% Syrah <b>Region:</b> Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County, California</p> <p><b>Vineyard</b></p> <p><b>Soils:</b> rocky, schist, well-draining <b>Elevation:</b> ~750ft, steep slope <b>Aspect:</b> southeast to northeast <b>Trellising:</b> vertical shoot position <b>Pruning:</b> cane pruned <b>Farming:</b> organic &amp; biodynamic <b>Harvest:</b> by hand</p>
<p><b>Wine</b></p> <p><b>Avg Sugar at Harvest:</b> 24.4 Brix <b>Yield:</b> 2.25 tons / acre <b>Alcohol:</b> 14.80% <b>pH:</b> 3.85 <b>Cooperage:</b> 36% new French oak <b>Harvest Date:</b> Oct 12-17, 2010 <b>Bottling Date:</b> April 2012</p>	<p><b>Wine</b></p> <p><b>Avg Sugar at Harvest:</b> 24.4 Brix <b>Yield:</b> 2.54 tons / acre <b>Alcohol:</b> 14.80% <b>pH:</b> 3.60 <b>Cooperage:</b> 37% new French oak <b>Harvest Date:</b> Sep 29-Oct 10, 2009 <b>Bottling Date:</b> April 2011</p>	<p><b>Wine</b></p> <p><b>Avg Sugar at Harvest:</b> 25.6 Brix <b>Yield:</b> 1.86 tons / acre <b>Alcohol:</b> 14.60% <b>pH:</b> 3.92 <b>Cooperage:</b> 27% new French oak <b>Harvest Date:</b> Sep 6-Oct 8, 2008 <b>Bottling Date:</b> March 2010</p>	<p><b>Winemaking</b></p> <p><b>Cold Soak:</b> 3-4 days <b>Fermentation:</b> inoculated with yeast, 10-14 days in length, open-top stainless steel tanks <b>Press:</b> at dryness, with stainless steel basket press <b>Aging:</b> 18-19 months on the lees in French oak barrels</p>