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October 2013
Volume II Issue 10



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Mutt Lynch Classy San Diego Italian Tour



Barking Good Wines

Mutt Lynch Winery

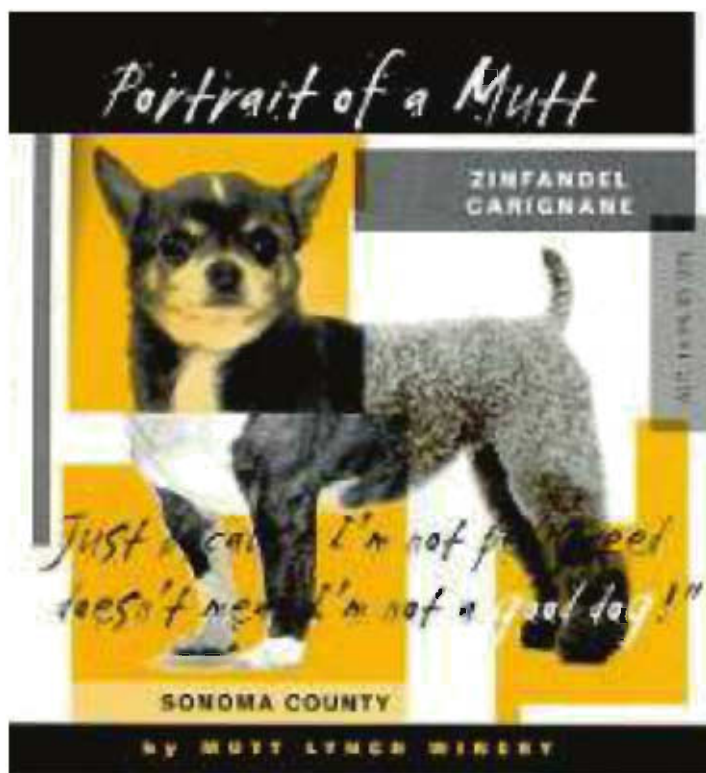
by Graham Bousfield

Fire and gasoline typically don't mix well. Yet a fire at an animal shelter and the knowledge of how to steal gas from a car proved to be two of the more important catalysts that created one of Sonoma County's more interesting and more philanthropic wineries, Mutt Lynch Winery of Healdsburg, California.

From humble beginnings in 1995, the Mutt Lynch Winery continues to combine the passion that Brenda and Chris Lynch hold for wine with, as they say, "all things dog."

The gasoline in the story relates to a day in 1989, when Brenda Lynch found three well-educated men, one of whom was

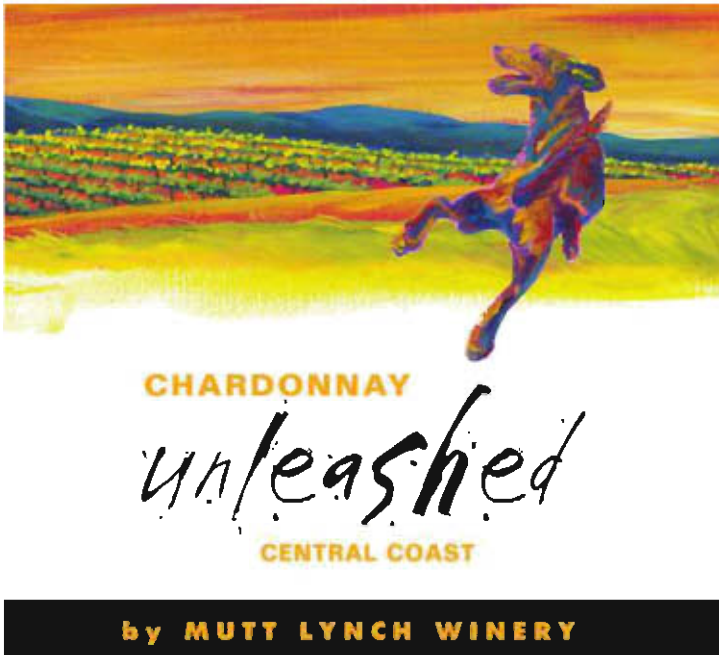
her winemaking husband Chris, out in the family garage trying to extract wine from a barrel without using a pump. The conversation was everything about theory and nothing about practicality.



Despite thousands invested in education and in winemaking, it was clear to Brenda that these men had never considered stealing a gallon or two of gas as part of a misspent youth. Using a siphon to effectively move fluid from one container to another wasn't even on their radar. And so, to protect the family investment in time and money, Brenda dispatched

the men and took on the role of garage winemaker, relying not upon theory but solely upon her natural sense of what to do and when to do it.

What followed were more formal studies at UC Davis in combination and continuity with their cellar experience at some of California's more established wineries, such as E&J Gallo and



Kendall-Jackson. Yet, as any frustrated winemaker can easily understand, Brenda and Chris longed for the day when they could make wine of their own choosing.

To no one's surprise in 1995, back out in the family garage, there were three barrels of delicious juice,

quietly fermenting and aging. However, bound by employer agreements and non-competition clauses, they were limited in terms of what they could do with the wine they were nurturing.

Which brings us to the fire.

Learning of a fire that had devastated a local animal shelter, the Lynch's wanted to help in whatever way they could. So, they asked their employer for permission to bottle and sell their wine for a doggone good charitable cause, with the proceeds going to help with shelter reconstruction. Within days, all 75 cases of Domaine du Bone had been sold, with the first case being bought by none other than Mr. Jess Jackson

himself. And so, through fire, fuel, and a lot of love, Mutt Lynch Winery found both its feet and its raison d'être.

The number of barrels in the garage grew, so did the need for the charitable service. By today's count, with total annual production approaching 6,000 cases of wine, more than 220 animal rescue organizations, national and local, have received assistance from Mutt Lynch.

The winery presently produces two tiers of wines. Its Dog Series is comprised of fruit-driven wines from Central Coast vineyards, with ripe fruit texture, excellent balance, and little to no oak expression. Each of the varietals has both a proprietary name and label, evoking the wine's style, from Unleashed Chardonnay and Fou Fou le Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc to Merlot Over and Play Dead and Chateau d'Og Cabernet Sauvignon.



Rounding out the series of six wines is Portrait of a Mutt Zinfandel and a new blush by the name of Rosie Rosé, which the winery describes as a refreshing wine, styled for the pampered pooch with a “Sasha Fierce” attitude.

Despite amusing labels, these are seriously good wines. Brenda Lynch believes in minimal manipulation of the fruit during fermentation and aging, with just enough oak to complement the wine's fruit and not overpower it. As Brenda puts it, “Focus on the vineyard to get ripe, true varietal character at harvest. And, don't ‘F’ it up in the winery.”

And, so it came to pass that the mix of fire and gasoline, when combined with passion and compassion; makes for some excellent doggone wine. **GWN**

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Graham Bousfield has a 40-year history in sales and marketing, serving five industries over five continents. For 15 years, he championed peer persuasion marketing, taking the technique beyond its foundation in pharmaceutical sales to develop new applications within agriculture, financial services, information technology and communications.

More recently, as a consultant in wine, Graham's specialty in business development has been a significant asset to wine retailers and restaurateurs alike. Now, in a partnership between Video Wine Links and Great Wine News, he shares those associations, relationships and experiences with wine enthusiasts and readers across the world.