

ADASTRA

# THE STARGAZER

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE ADASTRA WINE CLUB

LATE FALL 2023

In this issue we review your Wine Club selections, the 2021 Adastra Pinot Noir, the 2020 Adastra Chardonnay, and the 2019 Ed's Red Sonoma Valley. The first two are made from grapes grown on our certified organic vineyard, while the third is our popular négociant blend. On page 3 and 4, we detail a delicious Tart de Bry, which pairs wonderfully with the 2021 Adastra Pinot Noir; also on page 4 we introduce this year's "Invader of the Year," the ground squirrel. We hope you'll find lots to enjoy. Thank you for your support. Cheers!

*Chris Edwin*

## WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

### 2021 Adastra Pinot Noir *Carneros, Napa Valley*

The 2021 Adastra Pinot Noir is a garnet-colored wine. It has floral notes, and hints of cherries, nutmeg, and forest floor. Medium-light in body, the wine has pleasant cherry and spice notes on the palate. This is a wine that will benefit from aging. Adastra wines are estate-grown on our small, Carneros, Napa Valley vineyard and certified organic by the California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF).

2021 was another drought year for California. Lacking adequate water, the vines were restrained in their vigor. The upside of this was that we didn't have to do a lot of leaf removal or crop thinning. The downside was the pitifully low yields, just 1.24 tons per acre for the Pinot Noir.

After an early morning harvest on September 20, the grapes were brought to the winery for sorting. We like to use some whole clusters in our Pinot Noirs because we think the contribution of the stems adds flavor and interest to the wine. The remainder of the grapes

(about 80% of the total yield) were destemmed, the berries joining the whole clusters in the plastic fermentation vessel. After being allowed to soak for a couple of days, the juice was pumped over twice a day until it began to ferment spontaneously (using naturally occurring yeasts). At this stage, a "cap" of berries floats to the top of the the juice and is "punched down" twice per day to keep it moist and ensure integration with the remainder of the must. Once the must had fermented to dryness, the bin was sealed with a plastic tarp and sand. This procedure allows additional skin contact with the liquid, increasing color and flavor extraction. On November 1, the wine was pressed. To our disappointment the volume of wine was insufficient for even two barrels, so we filled one new Dargaud-Jaegle Marcel Cadet and put the rest into kegs. This means while about 62% of the wine was barrel-aged, the remaining 38% only saw stainless steel. After the wine had aged for 17 months, we racked the oak- and stainless-steel-aged components together into a tank and left them to harmonize for two and a half months before bottling on July 24 this year. We trust you will enjoy this wine.



#### 2021 Adastra Pinot Noir—Just the Facts

##### Adastra Vineyard Pinot Noir selections:

Pommard, Wädenswil, DRC, Dijon  
113, 115, 777

**Yield (tons per acre):** 1.24 tpa

**Harvest Date:** September 20, 2021

**Bottling Date:** July 24, 2023

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

**Alcohol:** 14.4% by volume

**Barrel Aging:** 62% new oak, and 38% stainless steel for 17 months, then 2.5 months in tank

**Barrels:** 100% French oak (62% new oak)

**Cooperage:** Dargaud-Jaegle Marcel Cadet

**Production:** 37cases

**When Best to Drink:** Now through 2036

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

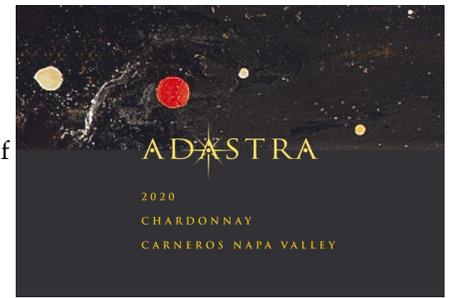
**What's in the Box?** *continued from page 1*

## 2020 Adastra Chardonnay *Carneros, Napa Valley*

The 2020 Adastra Chardonnay has an attractive gold color. It has subtle aromas of apple, fresh pineapple, brown sugar, citrus, toasted marshmallow, buttered toast and toasted almonds, along with a leesy element. Medium in body, the wine's flavors include citrus, apple, and apricot, with hints of coconut spice, marmalade, oak, and a mineral quality. It has a pleasant, slightly viscous, textured mouthfeel, and a lightly honeyed finish, with notes of apricot.

The 2019–2020 rain year (running October to September) gave us just nine inches of rain (about half the average). Although April and May were not particularly warm, late May saw a run of high temperatures. In August there were four days over 100° Fahrenheit, and September saw further heat spikes, peaking on September 6 with 109.9° Fahrenheit, the 2020 record high. The low soil moisture/high heat combination was certainly a challenging environment for the vines; smoke in the air from August 17 onwards only added to their stress.

We harvested all our 2020 grapes on October 2. Yields throughout the vineyard were low, but the Chardonnay was just 0.79 tons per acre. The Adastra Chardonnay, like its fellow the Boundless Optimism, was whole cluster pressed and settled for two days in a tank, before being racked to a French oak barrel. We used commercial yeasts and stirred the lees in the barrel once every two weeks for about six months. The wine spent 19 months in barrel and then a further three months in barrel before being bottled on August 9, 2022. Since the wine did not complete malolactic fermentation, it was sterile-filtered.



### 2020 Adastra Chardonnay, Carneros, Napa Valley—Just the Facts

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

**Yield (tons per acre):** 0.79 tpa

**Harvest Date:** October 2, 2020

**Bottling Date:** August 9, 2022

**pH:** 3.48 **TA:** 5.5g/L

**Alcohol:** 14.8% by volume

**Aging:** 22 months: 19 months in French Oak, 3 months in tank.

**Barrels:** French Oak

**Cooperage:** François Frères, Tonnellerie Ô

**Production:** 59 cases

**When Best to Drink:** Now through 2026

## 2019 Ed's Red *Sonoma Valley*

The 2019 Ed's Red is an enticing, flavorful, and full-bodied wine in the Ed's Red tradition. The aromas include dark cherry, plums, licorice, vanilla, almond paste and candied fruit. Smooth on the palate with fruit, spice and chocolate elements; a mouthwatering finish.

Ed's Red is a wine we've made since 2007.

We usually make it by buying wines on the bulk wine market and blending them together. Because the supply of bulk wine is inconsistent, the blend of Ed's Red varies depending on what's available, but the goal is always to make a flavorful wine, fairly full in body, which is easy to drink on any day of the week.

Although the "tagline" is "a hefty wine best paired with mammoth or vegetarian equivalent," the typical Ed's Red pairs well with a wide range of food, from aachenosaurus to zuul, as it were. This latest is a combination of Malbec, Merlot, and Zinfandel and is the second time we've made a wine from the 2019 vintage. This is because we felt these wines were superior to everything else available within our budget.

### 2019 Ed's Red Sonoma Valley—Just the Bare Facts

**Grapes:** 17% Malbec, 33% Merlot, 50% Zinfandel from the Sonoma Valley

**Bottling Date:** July 24, 2023

**pH:** 3.74 **TA:** 5.9g/L

**Aging:** Up to three years and seven months in used French and American Oak Barrels

**Production:** 147 cases

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



## PAIRING RECIPE: TART DE BRY WITH 2021 ADASTRA PINOT NOIR

This recipe is adapted from the 14th-century English manuscript *The Forme of Cury*. The tart features an intriguing sweet-savory blend of flavors and spices. We think it pairs beautifully with the 2021 Adastra Pinot Noir. Serve it with a side salad and fruit compote, or slice into narrow wedges for a holiday buffet appetizer.

Chilling the dough twice makes it easier to work with, but is time-consuming; as a shortcut, you could use your preferred premade tart shell. Or prepare the dish ahead of time through step 4 and add and bake the filling just prior to serving.

The recipe calls for a 9-inch tart pan, but a springform pan also gets the job done. Uncooked beans can be used instead of store-bought pie weights for blind baking the crust. If you don't have a pie crust shield, foil can be used, but is fiddly to work with.



**Source:** *Tasting History* by Max Miller

**Serves:** One 9-inch tart gives 6 reasonably-sized main course servings

**Cook time:** 2 hours, of which 40 minutes is active preparation time

### **For the Crust:**

**Note:** This recipe also works very well with chilled 2020 Adastra Chardonnay.

1/2 cup (65g)	Powdered sugar
1/2 cup (113g)	Salted butter, chilled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes, plus more for greasing
3 or 4	Large egg yolks
1-3/4 cups (238g)	All-purpose flour

### **For the Filling:**

1 lb (454g)	Brie cheese
6	Large egg yolks, lightly beaten
1/2 tsp	Ground ginger
1/4 cup (50g)	Granulated sugar
Pinch	Saffron
Pinch	Kosher salt

### **Make the dough:**

1. Sift the powdered sugar into a medium bowl. Add the cubed butter, then use a hand mixer to beat until smooth. Beat in 3 of the egg yolks until they are incorporated. Sift the flour into the bowl and stir until the mixture forms a loose, crumbly dough. If the dough is too dry to come together when pinched, mix in another egg yolk. (We found 3 yolks were sufficient.)
2. Form the dough into a ball and put it between 2 sheets of parchment paper. Using a rolling pin, flatten the dough into an 11-inch (28cm) disk that's 1/8- to 1/4-inch thick. Put the dough and parchment in the refrigerator to chill for 20 minutes. Lightly grease a 9-inch (1-inch deep) tart pan with butter and set aside.
3. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and peel off the top parchment sheet, then flip the dough disk onto the tart pan and peel off the second sheet. Gently press the dough into the bottom and the sides. Cover the pan in plastic wrap or foil and return it to the refrigerator for 20 minutes more.
4. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F/190 degrees C. Set the oven rack in the lower middle of the oven.

*Recipe continues on the next page*

## TART DE BRY WITH 2021 ADASTRA PINOT NOIR

*Continued from page 3*

### Blind bake the crust:

5. Once the dough in the tart pan is chilled, remove the pan from the refrigerator. Trim any excess dough hanging over the pan edge, then use a fork to prick the bottom of the crust all over. Line the crust with parchment paper and fill with pie weights. Put the pan on a rimmed baking sheet in the oven until the edges begin to brown, about 12 minutes.
6. Remove the crust from the oven and carefully remove the parchment and pie weights. To prevent the top edge of the crust from browning too much, cover with a pie shield or aluminum foil. Return the empty crust to the oven for 10 minutes, or until the base is just starting to brown. Remove from the oven and allow to cool on a wire rack for at least 10 minutes.

### Make the filling, bake, and serve:

8. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees F/180 degrees C. Set the oven rack in the middle of the oven.
9. Remove and discard the rind from the Brie. Cut the Brie into small pieces and add them to a food processor with the 6 beaten egg yolks. Blend until smooth. Add the ginger, sugar, saffron, and salt and blend to combine.
10. *Optional:* Author Max Miller notes, "For a stronger flavor of Brie, keep some of the rind and sprinkle chopped pieces of it on the cooled tart crust before adding the filling." We didn't try this, but it sounds intriguing.
11. Spoon the cheese mixture into the tart crust and smooth the top.
12. Bake the tart on the middle rack of the oven until the top is set and begins to brown, 30 to 40 minutes. Remove the tart from the oven and allow it to cool for 10 minutes before serving.
13. Serve with fresh fruit or fruit compote and 2021 Adastra Pinot Noir. Enjoy!

## THE WAR IN THE HOSES



For the past three years, Adastra has endured invasions. In 2021, it was the year of the False Chinch Bug. In 2022, there was a proliferation of California Toads. The toads were benign. The Chinch Bugs had a devastating effect on drought-weakened vines. In both cases, the invaders failed to reappear in significant quantities the following year.

2023 is the year of the Ground Squirrel, *Otospermophilus beecheyi*. Benefitting from the concealment offered by the long grass that grows on the fallow areas of the property, these creatures have not just dug burrows in the fields, they have excavated under sheds, and even penetrated the attic of the house, requiring the services of a (humane) wildlife removal expert. (He put up wire mesh protection and built a one-way door so that the squirrels could exit, but not re-enter.)



Largely vegetarian, ground squirrels also eat some insects; their bodies are about 12" long, while their bushy tails add an additional six inches. Burrows can be five to 35 feet in length, typically, and can accommodate multiple generations; each squirrel has its own entrance, necessitating more burrowing.

So far, the grape vines seem to be okay, but the tomato plants were affected. Chris fought back by placing coffee grounds in the entrance to some burrows, and was also heartened to notice a female Northern Harrier on a pole overlooking the vegetable patch. Because the squirrels skitter around the irrigation lines, Chris dubbed the Harrier-Squirrel conflict "The War in the Hoses."

The wildlife expert noted that mowing down the grass would encourage other predators, in particular coyotes. We see these creatures around the property from time to time and often hear them howling at night. We'd be happy for them to augment the harrier's efforts, though we perhaps wouldn't wish for coyotes be 2024's Invader of the Year.