



CHECKING IN:

SONOMA COUNTY

CHECKING IN  
MERRY EDWARDS 2022S

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2022	
DATE	AMOUNT
10/15	10.00
10/20	15.00
10/25	20.00
10/30	25.00
11/05	30.00
11/10	35.00
11/15	40.00
11/20	45.00
11/25	50.00
11/30	55.00
12/05	60.00
12/10	65.00
12/15	70.00
12/20	75.00
12/25	80.00
12/30	85.00
TOTAL	1000.00







# Checking In: Merry Edwards

From the Fall/Winter 2024 *Good Vitis* Issue

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# LETTER FROM



THE

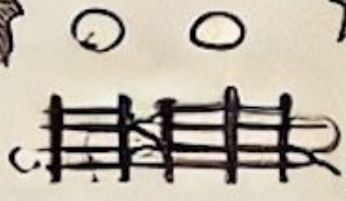
## THE GOOD VITIS EDITOR

### GOOD VITIS EDITOR

Readers, This holiday season has been a plethora of good wine for us at Good Vitis, and I hope it's been the same for you. We dug into our cellar and pulled out a few cases of the good stuff, and that wine along with most of what's written about in this issue was enjoyed by family. I love sharing good wine with good people, and I got to do that a lot recently.

Writing about all this good wine put me in touch with a lot of good people as well, and that's part of what makes writing *Good Vitis* so rewarding. Wine is as much about the people that make and sell it as it is about the terroir that helps define it. I hope reading about them and their wares will inspire you to meet them and their wines.

I've been thinking a lot about how I might want to change my approach to enjoying wine in 2025. One resolution I've made is to be more purposeful about the wine I buy. I've opened many wines in 2024 that I took flyers on over the last decade, and I've not always enjoyed them as much as the wines I know I like. 2024, and some of the wine covered in this article, are helping me focus in 2025. I hope they help you focus as well. Best, Aaron Menenberg.







Previous page: I tasted these wines blind.

I recently asked Chat GPT what the most reliable things in the world are in terms of knowing they'll happen every time they're supposed to happen. It provided several categorized lists including nature (the sun rising and setting, gravity, the changing seasons, tides, and the speed of light), biological and physical patterns (heartbeats, laws of physics), universal truths (entropy, circle of life), and even humorous reliability (Murphy's Law and taxes). The human-created systems list offered atomic clocks, the Gregorian calendar, postal systems, and Merry Edwards Winery making great wine.

Rimshot.

No, but seriously folks...let's talk about some of Merry Edwards' 2022 releases because they hold the winery's very high standards.

## **The 2022 Vintage**

I spoke briefly with winemaker Heidi von der Mehden about the vintage after tasting some of the wines. Since the acquisition by Roederer, the world of Anderson Valley fruit has opened up to Heidi. In the 2021 vintage they debuted the Dach Vineyard pinot noir, and in 2022 they added an AVA chardonnay and pinot noir. This means that the winery is no longer just a standard bearer of Russian River Valley (RRV), but is part of further developing the Anderson Valley's already impressive wine pedigree.

2022 turned out to be "an interesting year" in the Russian River, Heidi explained. "We had really early rains that stopped in February when we got some hard frost that created damage in the vineyards that needed tending." Once they got through that and into the spring, "things got to their normal paces." The summer was mild, "but [we] had some summer rains," nothing "that was concerning or caused damage or botrytis or anything, but it was odd."



What was truly odd waited until Labor Day. “In 2017, they were predicting a heat dome. At the time,” Heidi told me, “Merry [Edwards] was calling most of the shots and said we needed to pick anything close to be being ripe right away because it will be worse [than the predictions].” She was right. “We went from 76 degrees one day to 111 degrees the next. It was unheard of in Sonoma County.” In 2022, “I was looking at the weather forecasts and things looked normal, mild weather.” Then the forecasts started predicting a heat dome, “and my mind went to 2017.”

She called some early picks while leaving grapes hanging that were early enough in their development that she felt could weather the heat on the vine. “It turned out way worse than 2017. Went from the 70s to 115 degrees and held for almost a week.” The early picks created “a busy couple of days, but we got everything in in time. I felt really sorry for my crew on the crush pad processing the fruit in those conditions.” After that, “a week and half or two weeks later, we had first rain of the season. So [it was] a really compressed harvest that finished early.”

Anderson Valley was more straightforward: “Picked in late September. Sugars were fine, in balance [with the acids]. No issues of raisining.” But, “RRV was very hot.”

## **Settling into the Anderson Valley**

As I covered in my write up of Merry Edwards’ 2021 releases, the winery’s expansion into the Anderson Valley came by way of their acquisition by Roederer, which farms over 600 acres across the AVA. That year featured just the single vineyard Dach release. The bringing online of an AVA chardonnay and AVA pinot noir in 2022 takes the winery’s expansion in the Anderson Valley to the next stage.

Heidi and her team are learning the new region and vineyards. “With the pinot, one thing I’ve learned and am learning is that the wines really extract

quickly,” especially compared to the RRV, she told me. In her first year, she treated them similar to the RRV and they extracted “really fast; we can’t work them as much as we do Russian River [wine],” otherwise they “get hard and overly tannic. It’s very interesting, the wines want to be handled more gently [than RRV wines].” Asked how she treats them differently, she said that “they’re very giving in the tank, [which means that we do] fewer pump overs and punch downs, and are more gentle with them [to get better results].” In 2022, “we did less extraction and as a result I felt they are more balanced [than in 2021].”

I really enjoyed the 2021 and 2022 Dach Vineyard pinot noir, and looking back at my notes I can see the newer vintage is better balanced. While both vintages have the AVA’s signature crisp, almost crunchy, acidity found in young pinot noirs, the 2022 has a tannin structure better equipped to handle it. The 2022 AVA pinot, while not as complex or layered as Dach, shows quite a good balance of density and acid.

The newest of the new is the 2022 Anderson Valley AVA Chardonnay, which is a blend of one vineyard in the warm(ish) area of Booneville and another in the cooler deep end of the valley. “We were able to pick the fruit sooner than I would or might want to in the Russian River, and that helped us get lower alcohols and fresher flavors,” Heidi said, adding that she is “trying to make this one in a fresher style to differentiate it from the Olivet Lane chardonnay” that comes from the RRV.

Merry Edwards has been an institution in and for the Russian River Valley, so I’ve been interested how their loyal following has adopted to their Anderson Valley expansion, especially since the two AVAs produce significantly different wine profiles. “So far, the Anderson Valley wines have moved well,” Heidi told me. “The Dach had a bit of a slow start. We only sell it direct to consumer and it doesn’t have the same name recognition with our core clientele. Once they got past that, it’s been selling well.” The two AVA wines, both of which are distributed, “are both doing quite well. There seems to be





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an excitement around them in the market, hitting a note right now [that customers want] in being brighter and fresher and lower in alcohol. The chardonnay, that one has gone like crazy. We don't have extra grapes to make more, but I could easily sell more cases of it if I had the grapes."

I tried the 2022 pinots blind, but because the only white of the lineup was the Anderson Valley chardonnay, I tasted it knowing what it was. The nose was light and pretty, showing oyster juice, vanilla bean, peach, and citrus zest. Fairly light in body, it's quite smooth with a glycerin sensation. The acid isn't sharp, though it does stand out in a free-spirited and weightless structure. Flavors include salted caramel with loads of bright lemon, tart tangerine, and crushed limestone. It finishes on a peppery mint note. To subtext Heidi's description with my own tasting, this is meant to be a now-drinker that I wouldn't be surprised if someone called warm vintage village Chablis blind. It's a solid 91 points and a B+ value.

The 2022 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir is, like its chardonnay sibling, clearly of a place. The saturated nose has dark cherry compote, black plum, and raspberry. The similarly full-bodied structure has dense tannin with only a small amount of chew. The acid is mellow and integrated. I tried this, along with all the wines, over a three-day period and saw it go through an integration process that revealed most on day 3. Flavors include dark cherry, poached plum, raspberry, tobacco, violet, and allspice. It's good now with a decant, but I think a year or two of cellaring will present it best. 93 points. Value: A+.

Moving to the last of the Anderson Valley wines, we find ourselves with the 2022 Dach Vineyard Pinot Noir. The expressive nose featured a range of red fruit including raspberry, plum, and rhubarb, along with wet bark, mulberry, and green peppercorn. More heavily bodied than the AVA pinot, it retains bright, crispy acid and dusty, dense tannin. The structure and mouthfeel are quite nice. The sweet and tart flavor profile features red and black cherry, red and black plum, old leather, a bit of tar, and fungal wet soil. There's a lot of immediate appeal, but there's even more going on that suggests at least a few





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years of aging will produce something more engaging. The inaugural 2021 Dach was good, and this is a step up. Recommend aging until 2026 and tasting until at least 2030. 94 points. Value: B+.

We transition to the Russian River with the 2022 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. The brooding nose is dark and musty with cherry cola, blackberry, raspberry, and dark chocolate. It is full bodied with weighty tannin and shiny acid. The significant density offers a lot of textural chew. Wound up tightly in the tannins is black cherry juice, black currant, black plum, cassis, black tea, and musty soil. This seriously stuffed wine shows some movement on day 2, but by day 3 was closed down again. It will benefit from a solid five years of aging as the stuffing is preventing much of the dynamism from dynamiting. Usually one of my favorite wines from anyone anywhere in the RRV, the 2022 hits that mark again. 94 points. Value: A+.

Next is the 2022 Coopersmith Vineyard Pinot Noir. Dark fruit dominates the nose with dark cherry and lots of blackberry crumble. Extended air exposure coaxes out more baking spice and butter crust. Full bodied, it is big and round and juicy with good stuffing. The flavors are more accessible than the RRV AVA blend with black plum, black currant, blackberry, tar, menthol tobacco, and black pepper. While it is a dark wine in every respect, it can be enjoyed now with a few hours of decanting over the next five or so years. 93 points. Value: B-.

Finally, the 2022 Georganne Vineyard Pinot Noir is showing nicely. The nose wafts muddled sweet strawberry, fruit rollup, blackberry, bee pollen, and sweet oak. Medium in weight with broad, dusty tannin and juicy acidity, it is a pretty wine with a refined structure. The sweet flavor profile shows more floral qualities than the others along with dried strawberry, sweet rhubarb and red plum, orange peel, dusty earth/clay pot, and a touch of salinity. This is really nice and my favorite of the vineyard designates. It's tasty now, but I think 3-5 years of aging would be good for it. 94 points. Value: B+.

