



A collegial coupling

Blommer chocolates and Beringer wines provide several interesting pairings, intertwining and enhancing flavor notes in some instances while expanding palates in others.

Bernard Pacyniak // EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

To get to Howell Mountain, which sits on the western slope of California's Napa Valley, one has to head north from San Francisco across the Golden Gate Bridge through the lush Carneros region and Silverado trail, then wind east into the Vaca Range.

Why head to Howell Mountain? To begin with, it's one of the most prestigious of the 16 American Viticultural Areas (AVA) represented in Napa County. At 1,800 ft., the mountain's altitude not only gives the area its "above the fog" designation, it actually helps create a special microclimate, which leads to a unique terroir.

That terroir delivers powerful fruit from vines whose roots grip the thin layer of tuff, the decomposed volcanic ash from nearby Mt. St. Helena. Well-draining and white, this soil is short on nutrients but heavy on minerals. It grows red grapes with thick skins that are long on concentrated flavors.

As such, Howell Mountain's red fruit is recognized for plum, spice, currant and black cherry flavors with background mineral, caramel and chocolate notes. Amongst the many vineyards turning out wonderful wines from this area is the Bancroft Ranch Vineyard.

Beringer Vineyards, which is based in St. Helena, Calif., leases and operates Bancroft Ranch Vineyards. Founded in 1876 by brothers Jacob and Frederick Beringer who emigrated from Mainz, Germany, Beringer is the oldest continuously operating winery in Napa Valley.

"All of our grapes are harvested and bottled by Beringer for their award-winning Private Reserve collection," explains Sara Bancroft Clair (SBC), managing partner of Bancroft Ranch Vineyard. "In 2016, we will celebrate 30 years of exclusively providing this premium fruit for Beringer's exceptional wines."

Clair, together with her husband, Pierson (PC), who's vice chairman and ceo of



Tacoma, Wash.-based Brown & Haley Co., supplied the wines as well as tasting notes to pair with Blommer Chocolate's selection of dark, milk and white chocolates. Coincidentally, Pierson was vice president for Blommer Chocolate Co.'s operations in Union City, Calif., prior to joining Brown & Haley in 1997.

Joining the tasting panel were Rose Potts (RP), sensory programs manager at Blommer Chocolate, and Bernard Pacyniak (BP), editor-in-chief, *Candy Industry Magazine*. All chocolates were sampled with each wine, the favorites being recorded by each panelist. ☺



Blommer Chocolates:

Organic Dark 72%

A more intense cousin of Organic Dark 54%, which has notes of brown fruit, provides a chocolate impact with milk and demonstrates fruity acidity.

Revere Dark Chocolate

A robust 64 percent cocoa, bittersweet chocolate that is made with a special combination of cocoa beans to deliver a balance of deep, dark chocolate notes.

Appalachian Milk Chocolate

Complex development of milk notes to satisfy the sophisticated milk chocolate lover.

Liberty Milk Chocolate

A truly melt-in-your mouth light milk chocolate that highlights the delicately rich and creamy notes of the milk.

Cascade White Chocolate

A premium white chocolate coating with sweet milky notes.

Wines and Tasting Panel Notes:



Beringer Bancroft Ranch Cabernet 2010

Fermented in oak. This is a classic Cabernet with fruit-forward flavors of ripe, sweet black currants, black cherries, dark fruit, tobacco, spice and smoky oak. It leaves a heavy, chewy mouthfeel.

Tasting Panel: Perfect Match

"The Revere goes perfectly together; deep berry, currant flavors develop and resonate providing a lingering finish. This match demonstrates the essence of the term 'wine pairing.'" SBC

"Echo the Revere and Cab combination; great balance of flavors — berry chocolate cake, big and fruity." PC

"The Appalachian Milk's nutty chocolate notes are rounded out by the deep black currant of the Cab. All blend together to leave me with a chocolate note enveloped with the wine notes." RP

"Intense dark chocolate amplified by a bold Cabernet; this combo is not for the faint of heart." BP



Beringer Pinot Grigio 2013

100% fermented in stainless. Bright citrus, nectarine, apricot and honeysuckle flavors. Crisp and refreshing. The white grapes for the Beringer Pinot Grigio were blended from several California vineyards from Santa Barbara and Central Valley.

Tasting Panel: White on white

"The Pinot's clover, honey and lingering melon flavors were elevated to a new level by the Liberty milk chocolate." PC

"My favorite match with the Pinot was the Cascade White Chocolate. I experienced a buttery, dairy vanilla note like rich buttered rum cake." RP

"The sweetness in the Pinot and that in the Cascade White Chocolate complemented each other, quite to my surprise. A case of white on white producing a bouquet of color." BP

"The Pinot delivered a spicy burst, followed by a wave of rich vanilla cream from the Cascade White chocolate." SBC



Beringer Bancroft Ranch Merlot 2012

Generous notes of black cherry and dark plum throughout. Finely grained tannins and a nice texture give this Merlot a distinct level of complexity (rich tannins and a robust structure) while still being very approachable from the start. Fermented in oak. Aromas of ripe blue fruits and nutmeg.

Tasting Panel: Let freedom ring!

"The wine brought out the warm cream toffee notes of the Liberty Milk Chocolate, which balanced the spicy finish." SBC

"Liberty Milk Chocolate was my favorite with the Merlot kicking up the caramel in the chocolate and Liberty rounding out the astringency; felt like crème brûlée with fruit." RP

"Powerful explosion of dark cherries and lingering currant flavors blended with the deep, rich cocoa of the Revere." PC

"Smooth and sophisticated Merlot topped by the lovely milk notes in the Appalachian milk chocolate. These two can dance all night." BP



Beringer Founder's Estate Chardonnay 2013

Fermented in both stainless and oak. Balance of acidity and ripe fruit flavors. Fresh apple, pear, tropical fruit with light finishing flavors of vanilla and oak. Classically round mouthfeel. The white grapes for the Beringer Founder's Estate Chardonnay are a blend of Northern California vineyards.

Tasting Panel: Warm custard, tropical fruits

"A case of the intense organic dark chocolate tamed by the rounded fruits in the Chardonnay. Sharp initial contrast turned into a seminal experience." BP

"The Chardonnay notes of pear, pineapple and crisp apple are enhanced by the chocolate cake notes of the Revere." RP

"The pairing with Appalachian milk chocolate and Chardonnay brought to mind warm custard with mango and banana notes." SBC

"I found that the Revere 64 dark and the Chardonnay provided me with roasted, baked brownie and smokey flavors." PC