

A Conversation with John Olney

The weather in Dry Creek is a dusty 84 degrees and it's not significantly cooler in John Olney's office. Lytton Springs winery was built with straw bails and earthen plaster which provides outstanding insulation but without traditional air conditioning John's office is sometimes a little warm. Sporting lightweight chinos and a cornflower blue camp shirt that highlights his eyes, John doesn't mind the warmth as he sits at his desk writing labels for upcoming bottlings of the 2016 vintage. Jovial and optimistic, he's resigned to the heat and at the mercy of Mother Nature for a few more weeks before harvest. John's traditional biography can be found at <https://www.ridgewine.com/about/explore/john-olney/> but we'd like to show other sides of the man who makes Lytton Springs, beyond the typical press release. Here are his answers to a series of questions I recently asked him.

When I first got into wine I was spending a lot of time in the south of France with my uncle and I drank a lot of Domaine Tempier. We would have lunch at their estate starting with an aperitif of Bandol rosé at noon, followed by several other wines of various vintages, usually served with a leg of lamb. The meal would go until around 4pm, when we'd drink Marc (a distilled spirit similar to Grappa) as a digestif. On the way back to my uncle's house there would always be a case of Tempier in the backseat.

My dad always said "think ahead but don't think too far ahead". It helps to keep the anxiety level in check.

In terms of where I would live if it could be anywhere the Amalfi Coast of Italy comes to mind. Having said that, I really love living in Sonoma. Every time I get back from traveling abroad, driving home from SFO and seeing the rolling hills of

the Petaluma Gap, I think "not bad".

I most aspire to Paul Draper's discipline in tasting the wine throughout the winemaking process. All the decisions he made were based on taste, not formula. If you taste from the moment the grapes are crushed, and keep evaluating the emerging wine during fermentation, you pick up on so



John Olney, COO & Winemaker at Lytton Springs

Continued on page 3

INSIDE:

ON THE MARKET	PAGE 2
FALL RELEASES	PAGE 3

Ridge On-Premise Rankings Across the U.S.

In 2015, Ridge started working with Wine Services, a wine data reporting company based in Bordeaux. Wine Services takes a different approach to collecting data by actually performing physical location checks in top restaurants around the world. They put their eyes on wine lists to see actual wine placements, price points, and vintages of your brand and a competitive set.

Currently Wine Services surveys restaurants in seven major markets in the United States, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, Las Vegas, Southern California, and Northern California; as well as five international markets, London, Paris, Germany, Netherlands, and Switzerland.

In the seven US markets surveyed each year, Wine Services visits a total of 1771 of the most prestigious restaurants. Ridge, as a total brand, is distributed in over a third of these accounts. When ranked against a competitive set of 18 other premium to super premium domestic wineries (30 individual wines) Monte Bello comes in at number 7. This is against a set that includes many wines with a production level significantly larger than Monte Bello.

To me, one of the most impressive nuggets of this survey is the consumption rate by wine. This is a year over year view and measures whether or not the vintage of your wine has been updated over the course of the year, the higher the percentage the better turn rate you have. Two of our wines, Geyserville and Lytton Springs, came in with the highest percentages of the panel at 63% and 60%, respectively. This shows the strength and pull of Ridge on a wine list and that the end consumers are ordering our wines again and again.

Much like our minimalist approach to winemaking, trends and data do not change the way we go to market with our wines but it does give us reassurance that what we have been doing for the last 55 years is working. And most importantly our customers are continuing to enjoy the wines we make.

—Michael Torino, Vice President of US Wholesale Sales

3 Wines In Top 25 In U.S. Restaurant Wine Placements

		# of Placements
1	Opus One	690
2	Caymus, Cabernet Sauvignon	525
3	Joseph Phelps, Insignia	482
4	Caymus, Special Selection	393
5	Dominus	355
6	Shafer, Merlot	325
7	Ridge, Monte Bello	257
8	TIED Shafer, Hillside Select	249
8	TIED Montelena, Cabernet Sauvignon	249
9	Harlan Estate	230
10	Joseph Phelps, Cabernet Sauvignon	222
11	TIED Araujo, Eisele, Cabernet Sauvignon	221
11	TIED Shafer, One Point Five	221
12	Seghesio, Sonoma, Zinfandel	206
13	Freemark Abbey, Cabernet Sauvignon	183
14	Mondavi, Reserve, Cabernet Sauvignon	164
15	Mondavi, Napa, Cabernet Sauvignon	162
16	Colgin, IX Estate	156
17	Araujo, Altavracia	150
18	Ridge, Lytton Springs	149
19	Shafer, Relentless	138
20	Ridge, Geyserville	135

Fall Releases

2014 Chardonnay Monte Bello

Tasting Notes: Translucent pale gold color. Pear, fig, and yellow plum fruits, crushed rock-flintiness, and white flowers. Showing citrus fruit on entry, lightly toasted oak, dried fig, biscotti, honeysuckle, and a rich texture. Finishes with lively acidity.



2014 Monte Bello

Tasting Notes: Opaque ruby color. Intense blackberry fruit aromas, black currant, exotic barrel spice, toasted oak, licorice, and complex forest notes. Rich mountain fruit entry, refreshing high acid, full chalky tannin structure, and sweet oak; strong mineral finish.



A Conversation with John Olney, continued from page 1

much more of the flavor and character. Paul brought the selection process to Ridge, a willingness to leave out sub-standard components of a blend if they didn't improve the overall wine.

Right after pressing, when the must is going dry, at that moment the wines are being born and it's no longer grape juice. That's the most exciting moment of winemaking for me.

My last meal? How many courses do I get? To start, an omelet with black truffles, where there's about as much truffles as there is eggs. To drink with it, I'd probably go with a Montee de Tonerre Reveneau Chablis. Another course would be three good sized scallops, wrapped with Parma prosciutto, finished in the oven. Cannot beat it!

If I were reincarnated, I'd love to come back as a Rhodesian Ridgeback, with the caveat that I had a good owner. I do a lot of fostering for the humane society, walk into my home and I usually have a bunch of puppies. It's like being a grandparent, you get to give them back!

Even as a child, my Uncle Richard Olney was the most influential person in my life. When I was about ten, I went to France to stay with him the first time and then went back at fourteen. We'd go to my mother's home in Austria and

then go to the south of France to visit him. From fourteen onward I kept going back.

I worry about my kids' well-being, they're all teenagers now, so they're out in the world more on their own, as they should be. You always worry about your kids. And I worry about my home vineyard a fair amount. I also worry about whether the Blues will win the Stanley Cup before I die. Fifty years and they still haven't won!

If I quit making wine I'd become a butcher. I don't know why it interests me so much. I love cured meats, the process of it. I'd also love to work at a fishing dock. The number one way to get fresh fish is to be there when it comes in!

A piece of advice for my 18 year old self would be to slow down, learn patience, and take the cotton out of your ears and stick it in your mouth.

I've been really lucky in my life.

For the complete list of John's answers, please follow this link: www.ridgevine.com/about/news/conversation-john-olney/

—Interviewed by Dan Buckler, Regional Sales Manager

2015 Lytton Springs

Tasting Notes: Jammy raspberry fruit with pepper, mint and sweet toasted oak. Brambly fruit on the palate, sensuous, well defined tannins and balanced acidity.



2015 Pagan Ranch Zinfandel

Tasting Notes: Saturated red/purple. Appealing mixed black and red fruits, compote, exotic barrel spice. Ripe black cherry and plum fruits on entry, opulent and full-bodied, lively acid, and a sensuously long finish.



2015 Ponzo Zinfandel

Tasting Notes: Nose of citrus blossom, raspberry and mango, mineraly Bing cherry on the palate with supple tannins, refreshing acidity and a lingering finish.



2015 Lytton Estate Petite Sirah

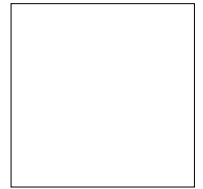
Tasting Notes: Dark inky color with blackberry, mineral, and pepper on the nose. Full bodied, layered fruit and spice with floral notes on a long sensuous finish.



Antonio Galloni
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96 points on 2014 Monte Bello

“The 2014 Monte Bello is bright, precise and finely sculpted throughout... In 2014, Monte Bello is built on bright, pulsating acidity and energy.” —Antonio Galloni, July '16



www.ridgewine.com/trade



Somm Symposium



7th Annual
Thank you to all of our somms that attended this year's **Somm symposium.**

An annual event at Ridge, we invite a dozen top sommeliers for two days of tours, tastings and to experience Ridge Vineyards.

To see more photos from the event, go to Instagram, [#ridgesommsymp](https://www.instagram.com/ridgesommsymp)