

**The winner of Judd's Hill Poetry Contest 2019 is "Winegrowers' Song" by Leslie Monsour.**

**Judge Leza Lowitz** (visit her at [www.lezalowitz.com](http://www.lezalowitz.com)) commented:

"This beautiful poem, written in formal verse with a skilful rhyme scheme, charms with its vivid imagery and tender message.

All the senses are aroused-- the dirt, earth, soil, trees, sky, rivers, and grapes themselves are embodied and emboldened. "Winegrowers' Song" is an ode to the natural elements that go into a single grape. It's a celebration of the work, art and magic that go into transforming that grape into wine."

**Winegrowers' Song**  
**by Leslie Monsour**

Ignoring what our mothers used to teach,  
We taste the dirt—not only taste, but savor  
The subtle, sandy clay and loamy flavor  
Of Napa Valley soil that spreads its reach

Of live oak and bay laurel to the sill  
Of the Pacific, where chill fogs ascend.  
Pinot and Chardonnay best comprehend  
The climate whispered here. The sky is still

Above the Silverado Trail. The river  
Inhales the musky air and rests its powers  
Awhile. In May the slopes are quiet bowers  
Of tiny, faint, sweet blooms, their tender shiver

Commencing the one-hundred-days' surprise  
Of ripening, unriddled mysteries,  
As vines interpret *terra's* reveries  
Into a song all tongues can recognize.

**On Misreading a Wine Ad**  
*"Made to go with the foods you love"*  
**by Leslie Monsour**

The fools I love drink any old wine,  
Whether red, rosé, or white.  
A wine made to go with these chums of mine  
Should flow freely and last all night.

The wine that is made for the fools I adore,  
Yours truly included, I fear,  
Is the wine that says "Yes" to the clamor for more;  
Its abundance is what we hold dear.

As long as there's plenty when push comes to shove,  
From late afternoon until dawn,  
Any wine's made to go with the fools I love,  
As long as the wine's never gone.

**A Day at the Bodega**  
by Bruce Gorden

Clouded, gray skies typical for this time of year. Francisco brings unique provincials from a neighboring county to the store this weekend. He and his father and his father's father, keep tight relations with Las Familias: the growers, some who only offer a taste to family and friends.

These are traditions that are not found in a public magnum but are known or rumored to be available at Francisco's Bodega, handed down mano a mano from the old country.

His reach spans the leggy length of California as far as Temecula to the south, some mid-valley sustainables from Buellton to Santa Maria, Sonoma and Mendocino - although he once spoke of Yreka but you must pass through hell to get there (I assume he means Redding).

Red Tail Hawks grace the Bodega property with their own proud traditions. The eye of the hawk is peeled for the safety of the Bodega.

Right now you can sample some of these local nectars, their bouquet evoking a synesthesia for even novice palates - an inner vision of bees, legs laden with pollen, butterflies, flowers and fruit.

If you show even a slight interest, Francisco will give you a weather history for the year of the grape harvest and geographical contribution. All that, he says, to enhance flavor expression.

With slight prodding he launches into the story of how he met Luz Elena during an internship on the Garcia de la Vega Vineyards. She, the only daughter in three generations - now the business mind behind the Bodega - Francisco the socially outgoing esthete.

**Dry January**  
by Erika Veurink

Ditch the resolutions and imagine what Julia Child would say about your unused baking tin. Imagine it in her perfectly pitched tone. Attempt a souffle or tarte or anything with a French twang to it. Delight in the stained edges of your cookbook. Call your mom and tell her she was right: about the apple crisp needing lemon juice and about mostly everything else.

Always pack a hat, even if your hair looks good. Expect delays on the A train. Feel delighted when you land the trash in the basket first toss. When things go your way, remember they don't always stay that way. Spend your laundry quarters on arcade games. Because your whites can wait until next week. Rally X cannot.

Consider Dry January and then remember champagne exists. Celebrating without bubbles is simply a meeting. Find friends who opt for pizza over a proper sit down dinner. Keep them. Shower them in book recommendations and sappy emails. They'll show up to dinner parties with cheese, even if it's raining. ↓

Wander through your neighborhood listening to jazz. Get bored and put on Prince. Get bored at least once a week. Keep a notebook close for the inevitable strike of inspiration. So much happens when we slow down. So slow down and feel amazed.

**Dear Night**  
**by Erika Veurink**

Dear night, You were soft and warm and I swayed in your velvet crawl space.  
Thank you for holding me.  
You carried me and I saw deep into the heart of things, the underbelly of honesty.  
There was wine and there was dancing and there were seconds.  
I held it all with wild eyes, certain it would break.  
But it tilted, swirled, caressed the rim and reminded me  
That what is ours is only ours for the night.

**Eden**  
**By Erika Veurink**

The table is the place to start:  
Our own, private creation myth.  
If I told you it was good, would you take a bite?  
The Euphrates is drying up.  
The Tigris is sinking villages.  
Our wine glasses are emblems of our own existence:  
Plentiful, fingerprinted, luke warm.  
We should start by naming things.  
The softness of your neck shall be called The Divine.  
The space between your words will be the New Testament.  
The way you twist your wrist in the soapy sink will be forever referenced as  
The Original Sin.  
When we leave this dinner, Eden, this beating planet--  
What should we take with us?

**How It's Done**  
**by William Heath**

Touch the bottle  
for temperature,  
swirl the dollop  
in its shapely glass,  
nose the aroma,  
smile with a nod,  
no need for a taste  
until the vintage  
is properly poured.  
Yet no matter  
how skillful  
the sommelier  
a tear slides  
down the bottle,  
then the wine  
begins to breathe.

**Puerto de Santa Maria**  
**by William Heath**

Family restaurant with green doors,  
fat father yelling at fatter sons  
to clear more tables for restive locals  
plus a few foreigners like me.  
“Wait a minute,” one son tells a group  
in three languages. “Qué desastre!”  
eyeing piles of dishes higher  
than his head. In the kitchen  
two even fatter women sweat  
over steaming pots the size  
of cauldrons. A rooster struts  
across the sawdust floor,  
cackles an irate commentary.  
Father and sons keep shouting,  
a beggar’s opera awash in arias.  
As the need is sorest food arrives:  
tall glass of gazpacho, fried sardines  
fresh from the Mediterranean,  
sliced kidneys in a sherry sauce,  
lamb shanks in a wicked stew,  
wine named for a bull’s blood,  
pastry for the arm of a gypsy.  
A meal worth the wait, a real find,  
at a fraction of a fine restaurant  
in Seville. For the best eats  
look to the girth of the cook—  
I learned that in Andalucía.

**A Few Sad Stanzas**  
**by William Heath**

As she closed the door  
all my stitches tore.  
I felt like a deaf man  
watching dancers.

I prefer the loneliness  
of a crowded room  
to all by myself  
in an empty home.

Sex don’t come easy  
and friends are few  
all that’s left for me  
is to sing the blues.

Lamp in the window  
picture on the wall  
wine bottle’s empty  
book’s about to fall.

Devil's Punch Bowl  
by L.D. Nguyen



Shoveling Wood Chips  
by Kevin FitzPatrick

I think of James Wright's poem, "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota," the poet reclining in mystical bliss through late afternoon and early evening.

I suggested we buy a weekend retreat when Tina talked of needing a change: a lake cabin without power or running water where we'd fish, read, doze, and never mow the lawn



She envisioned an eighty-acre farm with animals,  
fruit trees, large gardens with vegetables,  
grapes, berries, alfalfa fields for hay,  
woodlands for fuel, a way of life.

I am shoveling another load of wood chips  
on a Saturday afternoon, pulling the cart up the road  
to dump it over the path the draft horse erodes  
trudging from the pasture up to the barn.

We just corked one hundred bottles of wine  
from last year's harvest of currant,  
raspberry, blueberry, grape. Her two  
freezers are crammed with this year's berries

and now the grapes need picking.  
Tina's anxious. I'll tell her I'll quit my job,  
move out here, tie a hammock between two oaks,  
drink wine, eat grapes, whatever it takes.

### **Carronay** by **Kevin FitzPatrick**

The storm the weather people scared us with all winter  
hit for real on a Monday morning in the middle of March:  
high winds pushed a foot of snow into three-foot drifts.  
I was stuck on the farm until the plows came,  
unable to drive back to the city to work.

The horses and sheep were content with oats and hay;  
the dogs wrestled outside, then settled in the mud room,  
nibbling off chunks of snow from their legs and paws;  
birds at the feeders—bluejays, cardinals, woodpeckers,  
goldfinches, nuthatches, chickadees—chased each other off  
as if it were a normal work day.

I looked out the kitchen bay window and sipped tea.  
Tina was in the cellar checking, I assumed,  
the carrots stored in bins of sawdust since last fall.  
She had yelled up the stairs last weekend  
as if the cellar were flooding,  
“We have to do something fast!  
The carrots are sprouting!  
Do you know anybody at work who cooks or bakes?  
They're good in stew, soup, meatloaf—  
almost anything—cakes, muffins.”  
I found a few takers at work for a dozen of these  
dirt-cruste d, enormous, muscular carrots,  
photogenic in the sense they mirrored our toil  
tilling, planting, watering, weeding, harvesting.

I had planned to take another dozen to work  
when Tina appeared in the kitchen with a bin full.  
“Will you help me make carrot wine today?  
I tried that wine I made two years ago for the first time.  
It's like a fine chardonnay. I couldn't believe it.  
I'll call it carronay—but don't tell anyone it's carrot.”



The storm outside swept through the kitchen  
as I lugged up fifty pounds of carrots  
and Tina like a magician brought out lemons, limes,  
oranges, peppercorns, pounds of sugar, kettles,  
graters, mashers, straining bags and plastic buckets.  
I looked at my cup of tea on the kitchen table.  
I looked out the bay window.  
I knew she was German when I met her,  
but why couldn't I have met a book-reading German?

**Bubbling Celebrations**  
by **Diana Raab**

I love this sweet flute of champagne,  
my truth serum during celebrating cohorts  
Oh what magic it contains—  
It frees my mind  
into deeper catacombs of ecstasy,  
whether behind the keyboard of creation,  
or into journals capturing wandering words  
or bedrooms which releases me,  
as my eyes follow those bubbles,  
rushing like desperate lovers to its top.

Oh those French—that “je ne sais quoi”  
this ritualistic undressing of foils  
that embrace its bottle's opening,  
and slow twist of its wire cage  
like a brassiere holding breasts in place.

And then, its pop,  
a sudden pressure release  
into delicious effervescence and euphoria.  
Followed by a foamy uncontained overflow.

Oh my muse, oh my love  
please pour me another glass,  
but just one more thing you should know,  
once empty, you too will be dunked head first  
into that ice bucket beside this table for two,  
but only when your job is done,

as I move to my next bottle  
this sweet blissful champagne  
that reveals secrets  
hidden within my serum of truth.

**My Space**  
by **Diana Raab**

My space is larger  
than you are able to give me  
of what all stars have bestowed



as you lick your ice cream  
and shower my world with love.

I will follow you  
until you need me no more  
or until our moon sets  
in that third sky you painted for me  
with wine and cheese  
when we were but twinkles  
in one another's eyes

on that night when galaxies crashed  
and we wondered  
where our paths might lead us.

**Prisms of My Mind**  
by Diana Raab

You might glance at me  
and never imagine

certain things about me  
like how I bite my cuticles

at night and eat dark  
chocolate in my closet,

nurse a glass of chardonnay,  
sip coffee in my car,

and collect unusual shoes  
or antique typewriters.

You might also not notice  
many facets of my blues,

hidden in these mirrors  
of my mind, hardly seen

on creases of my face  
but definitely in my living space

braided into my ruminations  
about our universe during these

moments when all I can do  
is create dark poems

↓

which hopefully one day  
will evaporate into happy tears,

as I drip calming chemicals under  
my shrived aged crone tongue.



**Just a Taste of Friendship**  
**by Gretchen Fletcher**

Down rows of espaliered vines now  
in this season cut back  
almost to stumps  
past oak barrels stamped "Beaune"  
to wood planks set on sawhorses –  
makeshift tables for momentary friends  
who like as not will never meet again.  
We sit like lifelong pals and watch circles  
of California sun float in our glasses.  
Our laughter grows like our friendship.  
The Cabernets are fun,  
but then the Pinot Noirs become really funny  
and make way for knee-slapping Chardonnays  
followed by hysterical Zinfandels.  
Our new-found friends become wittier  
till, the sun low, we vow to stay in touch  
then go back down those rows  
of vines and leave, forgetting  
to exchange e-mail addresses.