

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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Outdoor entertaining design ...

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Sip into summer



A grouping of roses, calendula, and Nigella offers scents of summer.

Photo Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

"As the scent to the rose, are those memories to me." – Amelia C. Welby

Cooler weather has bidden a sweet goodbye, and warmer days beckon us to linger outdoors. My garden is ablaze with blooms and the aromas of scrumptious scents. My daughter Heather Brittany, also an avid gardener, is visiting and wants to learn more

by walking through the landscape with me. However, on this occasion, I am the student and she is the teacher as we stroll through the perfumed botanicals. Heather is a sommelier, a trained and knowledgeable wine professional working in an elite and innovative winery in Temecula.

With a glass of vino in hand and several varietals opened on the patio, she crushes leaves and pinches petals informing me of

the subtle flavors we may be experiencing as we sip our way through the backyard. We pick nasturtium, rose, mint, mock orange, cherry, lambs ear, calendula, Nigella, lemongrass, fennel and a sliver of an olive branch. We stick our noses in lilies, lavender and jasmine, inhaling deeply. We scoop a handful of soil and mulch to draw in the aromas of nature. Rosemary, sage, thyme, chervil, parsley, oregano and bay ... I haven't ever thought of them as essences of wine. At each stop, she encourages me to stop, breathe in, and imagine. "Touch the lambs ear. Feel the velvety finish of the Queen Elizabeth rose. Take a bite of fennel. Slow down. What do you see? What do you smell? What do you feel? What do you taste?"

I was born and groomed in the vineyards of Napa Valley where I learned farming and gardening skills from my parents and grandparents, yet I've never ambled in my private gardens equating my flowers and herbs with the wine I consume. Often I've been told that as a writer, I should be crafting the verbiage on wine labels. What has kept me from being creative in that format are some of the normal descriptions that I read on bottles. Leather, tar, asphalt, and tobacco are not ingredients that I choose to imbibe. But here, in my garden, I understand. We luxuriate in the multitude of floral opportunities to discover the subtleties of the fruit of the vine.

A whiff of a barnyard reminds me of my childhood riding horses, tending sheep, branding cattle, and raising chickens. Pine and redwood needles evoke the memories of Christmas. A shaving of St. Lucia nutmeg makes me nostalgic for Thanksgiving. Narcissus and jasmine are the smells of spring.

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