

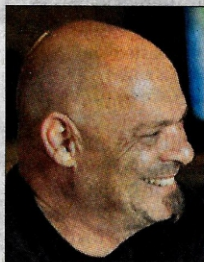
WINE OF THE WEEK » PEG MELNIK

# Melding two passions to create this Longboard

You won't find a pew in a vineyard, much less on the ocean floor, but Oded Shakked isn't one for formalities. Shakked still refers to both — the vineyard and the ocean — as his church, a place of reverence.

"Surfing and winemaking are very similar," Shakked explained. "You have to surrender to something that's bigger than you are. Control is an illusion."

The winemaker, who made peace with Mother Nature long ago, is



Oded Shakked

behind our wine-of-the-week winner — the Longboard 2017 North Coast Sauvignon Blanc at \$24. This sauvignon blanc is a standout with hightoned fruit — grapefruit and lime — with a kiss of vanilla. It's light on its feet with great minerality.

"We are absolutely trying, since 2005, to define our own style as a three-legged balance between California, Sancerre and New Zealand styles," he said.

Born in Israel, Shakked, 58, speaks five languages: Hebrew, English, French, Spanish and a little German.

"After getting the wine bug in France, Spain and Portugal, it was the first time I took a look at the UC Davis syllabus for the Bachelor of Science degree in fermentation science," he said. "I was hooked."

Shakked came to California to pursue winemaking in the mid-1980s and studied at UC Davis, graduating in 1988. A decade later he launched his hobby wine brand, Longboard Vineyards. The brand grew, and Shakked left the corporate winemaking world in 2005 to focus entirely on his private label.

Celebrating his two passions, Shakked has created a following among wine-loving surfers at his Healdsburg tasting room.

"When you are surfing, you are using the waves as energy, translating your own dance on the waves,"

he said. "Different surfers will dance differently on the same wave."

Shakked said the same is true of wine. "Winemakers are translating the vineyard and the growing season with a dance on your palate," he said. "Winemakers with the same fruit make different wines, a different dance."

While passionate about wine, Shakked is an unfussy winemaker who doesn't understand the cult winemaker culture. "Can you name the winemaker of Chateau Lafite?" he asked. "Dom Pérignon? I try not to be jaded, but it's just wine."

Shakked is so down-to-earth he refers to himself as a "vinegar stopper," alluding to wine's natural progression unless interrupted by the good intentions of winemakers.

That said, Shakked loves playing a role in enriching America's food and wine culture.

"I'm proud I'm helping refine the food and wine palate," Shakked said. "People used to order steak well done with A.1. Sauce. Now people are eating sushi."

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## THIS WEEK'S BLIND TASTING

### Surf's up — Refreshing sauvignon blancs, fumé blancs

#### TOP PICK

#### Longboard Vineyards

Longboard, 2017 North Coast Sauvignon Blanc, 13.5% alcohol, \$24. ★★★★★

This is a pretty sauvignon blanc with hightoned fruit — grapefruit and lime — with a kiss of vanilla. It's light on its feet with great minerality. A standout.

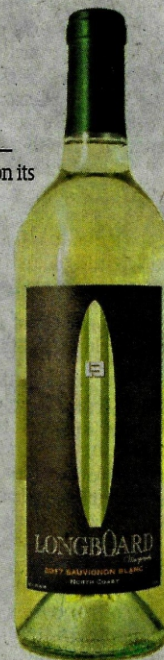
#### TASTY ALTERNATIVES

**Robert Mondavi Winery, 2016 Fumé Blanc, 14.5%, \$22. ★★★½:** This is a tasty fumé blanc with notes of ripe peach, Meyer lemon and grapefruit. It's buoyed with bright acidity and it's a touch grassy. Smart.

**Duckhorn Vineyards, 2017 Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc, 13%, \$30. ★★★★★:** A tangy sauvignon blanc with a supple texture. It has tropical flavors, with bright acidity and finishes crisp. Nice length. Impressive.

**Foursight, 2016 Charles Vineyard, Anderson Valley Sauvignon Blanc, 12.8%, \$25. ★★★★★:** A lovely sauvignon blanc, this wine has notes of grapefruit, lemon and mineral. Great quench. Bravo.

**Grgich Hills, 2017 Napa Valley Estate Grown Fumé Blanc, 13.5%, \$31. ★★★★★:** This fumé blanc is nice and dry with crisp minerality and notes of papaya and lemon. Well crafted.



#### STAR RATINGS KEY

- ★★★★★ = Classic
- ★★★★ = Highly recommended
- ★★★ = Good
- ★★ = Limited appeal
- ★ = Not recommended