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# The Substance Of SUBSTANCE

By Joe Chauncey

**E**arly in 2007 Boxwood was approached by Jason Huntley (founder of Waters Winery) and asked to explore a new brand being considered by Greg Harrington (Gramercy Cellars), Jamie Brown (Waters wine-maker), and himself. This wine would be priced under \$20 and would target a market that their ultra-premium wines could not reach. We developed six brand ideas and one, based on the Periodic Table of Elements, was selected for further development. What follows are notes from our process of exploration of the target market, our principles of design, the wine varietals and packaging criteria, brand development, and the impacts of this brand on the marketing and sales of the client's wine.

## TARGET MARKET

The young urban professional, aged 21-40, likes to go to clubs but also entertains at home. They probably drink more wine outside the meal than with but are learning to pair wine with food. These individuals have a strong network of friends, are passionate about their lives, are design oriented, and are

well informed. They practice sustainable living, recycle their glass, and are looking for a wine that has value and syncs with their palate. A friend likely introduced them to the wine they drink or they read about it on the web. This demographic likes interactive websites and enjoys blogging, Tweeting, and being part of a community, a tribe. They want a wine that they can relate to and become easily informed about with layers of information so that they can "own it", drink it, serve it knowledgeably, and recommend it to their friends as they would. These consumers don't want things dumbed down; they want the facts and want them presented honestly. This target market wants to purchase products with a story and believes in the concept of change. The fact that direct wine sales at tasting rooms, wine clubs, and through internet purchasing occur at a much higher rate than that of the industry as a whole speaks to this concept.

Initial sales were planned through distributors to be offered as a glass pour in restaurants. This makes the web and/or offering a club or wine 'tribe' component very important in

building the brand to take advantage of the direct sales market surge. The second phase would take it to retail shelves and end stacks in grocery stores, wine shops and markets, and eventually to a branded tasting room.

## DESIGN

We used the following five principles as a basis of design:

**Innovate:** Approach the young wine drinker by becoming integrated into his/her lifestyle through friends, an interactive website unlike any that has been seen before, an informative blog, and Twitter. Develop information about the wine that is both educational and fun while using bottle shapes that are traditionally appropriate for the varietal. Create a multi-level Flash-based website that is also accessible on PDAs and smart phones so that wine can be ordered and learned about at any time.

**Differentiate:** Create a label that can be easily picked out of a shelf lineup, a striking end stack in a grocery or wine shop, and an innovative website that demands attention. Promote viral communication that comes from critical review of the package design, design awards, and blogs.

**Collaborate:** Incite thinking across a broad range of individuals, including the client owners, tasting room and wine-making staff, architects, and designers to develop design ideas that are unique to the brand. For Substance, the entire group has been so excited about this brand that we have found ourselves spontaneously (yes, even in the middle of the night) generating new

innovative marketing concepts that will promote brand loyalty and recognition.

**Simplify:** Present the facts and the information necessary to make a good decision about the wine. Don't fluff up the story, don't use terms that are difficult to understand and certainly, don't dumb it down.

**Cultivate:** The highest brand loyalty occurs at \$5 and below and \$70 and up. In the middle ground everything is up for grabs. It is important to cultivate a target consumer through more than a strong package. A supportive website and club or 'tribe' with a blog will help spread word of the brand.

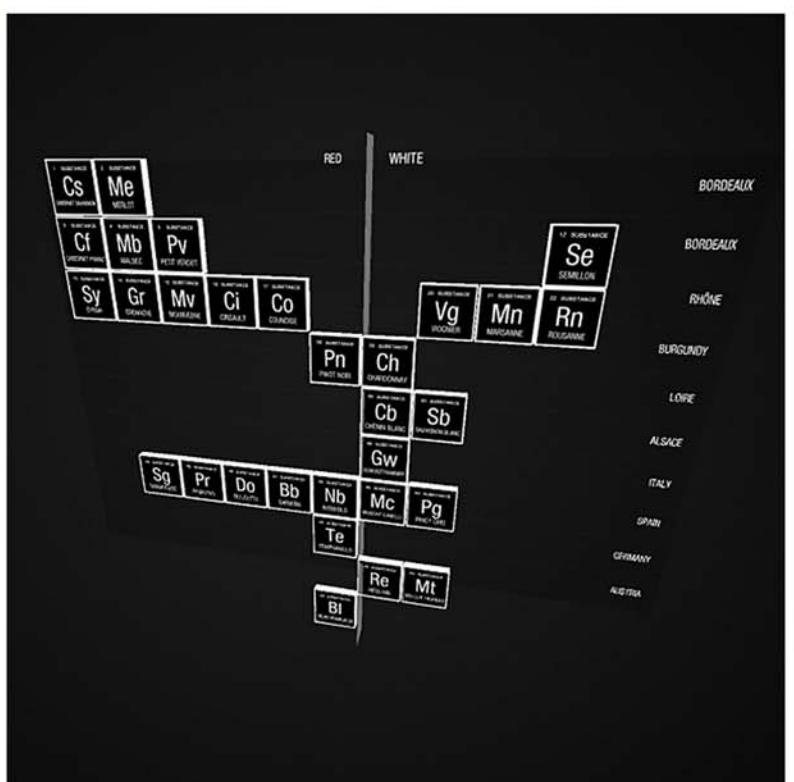
## WINE

**First release:** Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay  
Wines now available: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Cunoise, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Gris, and Viognier

## PACKAGING

**Bottles:** 750ml Bordeaux, Riesling, & Burgundy shaped bottles  
**Cork:** Standard 2" cork with custom brand  
**Capsule:** Foil, custom printing  
**Printed Case:** 2,000 cases for the initial release falls below the hard deck limit of what a glass company will do with a custom case. We would need to have the cases made and the bottles would be transferred during bottling. As the brand grows the printed case becomes more feasible.

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## BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Wine is as much an art as it is a science. What better way to express this basis than a Periodic Table of Wine with each varietal reflected as an element or substance? All of the names one could think of that related to the Periodic Table were already taken, however, Jason suggested the word "Substance" and it was available. He set out to get it registered, and we began refining our design.

The label concept was bold and if we could develop a "Periodic Table" of grape varietals to give the labels a place of reference we might really have something. When on the web, one could click on an "element" in the table and the history of the grape varietal, tasting notes, and reviews would pop up. Creating an interactive educational component to the website will bring the young oenophile back again and again to learn more and to purchase wine.

We studied retail shelves in grocery stores and wine shops to better understand scale and proportion of the label in relationship to others in its price point. We discovered that the greatest number of labels are light colored on a dark bottle - there are so many, in fact, that they become a blur. Bottles that stand out at this price point have darker labels, color or bold graphics. Since we were recreating the periodic element (substance) as a wine label and were using a dark bottle, we elected to reverse the standard and chose white text on a black background to make it show well on the shelf and create an edgier package. It also completely separated Substance from the Waters and Gramercy brands, which have light backgrounds and dark text. It would be the yin to their yang. Not only does it stand out in the shelf but it also creates a striking end stack with black boxes.

### Periodic Table

To anchor the brand we created a Periodic Table of wine varietals currently grown in Washington State over a weekend. This was based on information gathered from a variety of sources including the WAWGG December 2006 varietal report. The table is meant to be fun, educational, and interactive and could be used on the website, printed on t-shirts, posters, and grocery end stack cards. It is organized according to classic areas of origin for each grape varietal with the five noble Bordeaux varietals headlining the chart at numbers one through five. In each classic area of origin additional varietals can be added utilizing the blind numbered spaces that remain unused. This feature will allow the numbers to remain constant for the life of the brand. Greg made a few adjustments that made our layout even better and the final design of the Washington State Periodic Table of Wines was complete.

Each varietal is given a different two-letter "elemental" abbreviation for use on the Periodic Table and to identify the wine throughout the brand. For instance, Merlot becomes Me, Cabernet Sauvignon is Cs, Syrah is Sy, and so on. On the web, using 3D Flash, the table has the ability to provide as much information as one chooses. Roll the cursor over

Cabernet, the individual varietal almost feels like it will jump off the screen. Click on it and it flips over to reveal additional information, a grape profile, tasting notes, and ordering information.

### Label

The label is printed on gloss stock and varnished so that it has the same sheen as the bottle and the black disappears, leaving only the white letters and outline as if they have been painted on the bottle. We chose to create a clean display label and make it artful and minimal. Each display label includes five pieces of information: the year in a stacked square format, the brand name of Substance, Washington State, the varietal elemental abbreviation, and the grape varietal written out beneath the abbreviation. Our strategy was to create a package that begged to be picked up and once it is in the consumer's hand they are more likely to purchase it.

On the opposite side of the bottle much of the same information appears along with the Substance number on the Table and the website address. To emphasize one of our primary brand builders, the website address is bolded and centered on the back label. It is also shown in a variety of additional locations, such as capsules, corks and boxes.

### Capsule

The capsule is flat black with white lettering of the website around its circumference. The top has a white square that punctuates the identity and makes it highly recognizable when in a wine rack.

### Cork

The cork is branded with the website address so that when the capsule has been destroyed and the bottle recycled, the purchaser still has a Substance calling card.

### Boxes

In keeping with the dramatic black bottle background and white lettering, the box is black with a large white logo on it in the same format as the wine labels. In this scenario, instead of the varietal name the symbol is Su and the brand name below it is Substance. In the upper right hand corner is Washington State, the location being emphasized by this particular brand. In the upper left is the simple white square.

Ring the bottom of the box is the website address and on the opposite end (the inventory side) of the box centered in the field is the label matching the wine in the box. This could be either the front label or the back label with the UPC code on it.

When end-stacked the boxes are a dramatic statement, shouting out the brand. The periodic chart could be placed on the header card on the top of the stack enticing purchasers to look for other varietals in the Substance line up.

### Logo

The logo works at a variety of scales. At its smallest, it is a simple white border with a small square in the upper left hand

corner and appears on the top of the capsule. At its largest, it is the printed 10x10 on the end stack wine case. It is graphic, bold, unforgettable and always a perfect square.

## IT WORKED

With all this planning is the brand a success? Yes! Substance has expanded on its initial 2006 vintage of three varietals, to ten. The brand and the wine are widely recognized and have been written about on countless blogs and featured in magazines. The writing about the brand created broad awareness across the country helping to drive initial sales - one writer noted that even when the wine was gone the bottle still looked great. It was named "Coolest Wine Label" by Seattle Magazine in 2008 and Best Washington State Malbec under \$20. In August Graphic Design USA honored the Substance brand and website with 2009 American Graphic Design Awards. And if that isn't enough, the 100% single varietal wine is delicious and unique and the partners' goal is to release a wine for every varietal that is grown in Washington State.

It has been said that buyers can be influenced by the package on their first purchase but it is the contents in the package that keeps them coming back. In the case of Substance, this is proving to be true: Two of the wines recently scored 90 points in Wine Spectator.

This has become one of the best collaborative efforts of our careers and with a brand that allows for expansion as Substance does, there are countless other ways to market this product. Just wait to see what we've thought of next!

## CREATIVE TEAM

### Designers, Programmers and Writers

Jeremy Reding, K.O. DeVore, Liz Coleman, Keith Guerin,  
Linda Pal Chauncey, Joe Chauncey

### Owners, Winemakers and Managers

Jason Huntley, Greg Harrington, Jamie Brown,  
Robbie Ebel, Christa Hilt

[www.winesofsubstance.com](http://www.winesofsubstance.com)

*Joe Chauncey founded Boxwood (an integrated design studio) in 1989. The three words they use to describe themselves are: collaborative, creative, and assiduous. The firm has completed and has on the boards wineries and wine industry brand identities in Washington, Oregon, California and British Columbia and the entire professional staff is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified by the U.S. Green Building Council.*

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