



HARVEST 2009: A ROLLER COASTER OF A YEAR

Sebastopol, CA – This was our 19th harvest at Marimar Estate and, looking back, I am struck by how much more erratic and challenging harvests seem to have become. In the 2009 growing season we faced rain, followed by cool weather, followed by heat waves – all presenting trials for our team. For awhile, because *véraison* came late, we expected a late harvest, around mid-September – but instead it arrived September 2. And to top it all off, almost all the fruit in our vineyards ripened at once!

It was truly a hectic, roller coaster of a harvest. But we ended up with some beautiful fruit!

The Spring and Summer

Cool weather at the beginning of spring turned out a good budbreak and nice-looking bunches – all according to a predictable schedule. But it rained just before bloom, which resulted in *coulure* or shatter: very sparse berries and small clusters. This poor set was due to the weather and many of the flowers never became berries. Our Sonoma Coast grapes were especially affected because bloom occurs later there, so the seven inches of rain that fell affected it even more than in Russian River.

The mild summer delayed *véraison*, when the red grapes turn color and the whites become translucent. Normally, by August 1 *véraison* is complete, but it was still not finished August 15.

Harvest will be Late – Let's Go to Brazil!

So anticipating harvest by mid-September, I went off to Brazil on August 21 with my daughter, Cristina, for five days of work in Sao Paulo & Rio (they love our wine there!) and five of fun in Salvador de Bahía & the Amazon jungle. We returned September 1 – and harvest started the next day! Several blocks of Pinot Noir in the Don Miguel Vineyard were ready to be picked, so we went non-stop for a few days.

Then, after a short cool weather break, the rush to pick was on again Sept. 16, as everything seemed to ripen at once with a heat wave – just like last year. In Sonoma Coast's Doña Margarita Vineyard, the heat affected the fruit so much that the berries started to wrinkle and dry out before they were ripe. So by the time we picked, we had just 1.3 lbs per vine – an extremely small yield considering our densely planted vines: 2,340 vines per acre! We harvested the Sonoma Coast fruit in just 4 days, Sept. 18-21.

Night Harvesting, Again

Because we harvested at night last year with such good results, we were ready to start on day one! We can only night pick the Chardonnay, since the Pinot rows are too steep and the workers need to have ideal visibility. But the Chardonnay ripened slowly, so it was only on Sept. 23 that we started in the dark, at 3 a.m. And my tradition continued to take coffee, hot chocolate, and donuts to the pickers!

Pinot Noir from the Don Miguel Vineyard was picked at an average 24° Brix. The *Earthquake Block* fruit (Pommard clone) looks fantastic – model vines, good crop, early ripening and consistently high quality. Our Chardonnay, picked Sept. 10-26, came in at an average Brix of 23°. The Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir came in at an average Brix of just under 25°. We ended up with small berries and good maturity.

Our First Albariño!

An exciting first is our Albariño, which we picked on third leaf. The 1.5 tons from our 1-acre planting was not enough to make a stand-alone bottling so we've blended it with Chardonnay – and we love it. It shows good acidity, with an abundance of citrus and floral flavors. We can't wait until it's ready!

Marimar Torres
Winegrower/Proprietor

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2009 HARVEST



THE VIEWS ARE STUNNING FROM THE TOP OF SONOMA COAST'S DOÑA MARGARITA VINEYARD.



THE PINOT NOIR AT THE DOÑA MARGARITA IS BEAUTIFUL – BUT SO LITTLE OF IT!



A GOOD BUT SAD EXAMPLE OF *COULURE* OR SHATTER: VERY SPARSE BERRIES AND SMALL CLUSTERS.



SHATTER SHOWED RIGHT AFTER SET, WHICH WAS POOR DUE TO THE WEATHER. MANY OF THE FLOWERS NEVER BECAME GRAPES.



PRETTY FURIOUS ACTIVITY STARTING AT 3 AM! CHARDONNAY PICKING AT NIGHT KEEPS GRAPES – AND PICKERS – COOL.



CHICO AND BONITA'S FAVORITE PART IS EATING THE JUICY GRAPES RIGHT FROM THE VINE.