



Harvest 2011: The Worst of Times May Result in the Best of Wines

Sebastopol, CA – It was a harrowing harvest preceded by a difficult growing season. We encountered challenges all along the way: a cold spring that showered us with untimely rain, bringing us late bloom and fruit set; a cool summer that resulted in high pressure for powdery mildew and early botrytis; a shortage of manpower at harvest; and in the end, dramatically reduced yields. But thanks to our team's valiant efforts, we were able to successfully address each of these challenges. We believe 2011 will turn out to be a vintage of excellent quality, with low-alcohol, good acid and well-balanced Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs that will age gracefully for a long time.

The Late Harvest

The harvest was delayed by a soggy spring and continually wet weather through June. We began harvest Sept. 20 in the Don Miguel Vineyard (almost as late as last year's record of Sept. 26) and Sept. 27 in the Sonoma Coast's Doña Margarita Vineyard – with the lowest yields in our history!

The nice surprise was that, although harvested late, the fruit came in with great acid levels and wonderful flavors. The Don Miguel Vineyard Pinot Noir averaged 24.8 Brix, our usual sugar level; but Pinot Noir from the cooler Doña Margarita Vineyard came in at only 23.5 Brix, yet with excellent balance. These figures should translate to moderate alcohol levels, which we are delighted about!

Fewer Vineyard Workers, but Happy Ones

The shortage of harvest hands meant picking was slower, longer and harder for our regular team. Except on the steepest slopes we regularly picked at night, which we prefer because the fruit comes in cool and it's less tiring for the crew, so they like it. And as it's been the tradition for three years now, I delivered coffee and doughnuts to the team in the vineyard; this year, however, they changed the requested time from 2:45 to 6:30 a.m., at the break of dawn – we were all happier!

A Tough Year to be Organic

Due to their nature, organic fungicides are much less effective than conventional ones – and more expensive. Spraying to protect against fungi, plus leafing, hedging and thinning the vines, and finally removing damaged fruit was non-stop work. This was our worst year in history for both powdery mildew and botrytis. But our efforts paid off, as I kept hearing that ours were the cleanest vineyards in the region – and in the end, even more so than conventionally farmed vineyards.

Albariño scores!

We picked this elegant, aromatic variety native to North West Spain on October 1. It came in with very low sugars: just 21.5 Brix, which should translate to around 13% alcohol – perfect! Our second 100% Albariño bottling displays very attractive fruit and we think it could be outstanding.

Last, as usual: Tempranillo and Syrah

On October 19, we finally picked our Tempranillo and Syrah. The fruit came in looking healthy and beautiful; with skins much thicker than those of Pinot or Chardonnay, they can withstand the rain.

All in all, we think 2011 has the potential to be one of our greatest vintages – time will tell!

Marimar Torres
Winegrower/Proprietor

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2011 HARVEST



NIGHT HARVESTING ALLOWS THE FRUIT TO ARRIVE AT THE WINERY IN PERFECT CONDITION



SUNRISE IS A BEAUTIFUL TIME IN THE VINEYARD. THAT'S WHEN BONITA AND I GIVE THE CREW A COFFEE & DONUTS BREAK!



THE PINOT NOIR FROM OUR "EARTHQUAKE BLOCK" LOOKED FABULOUS THIS YEAR, AS YOU CAN SEE

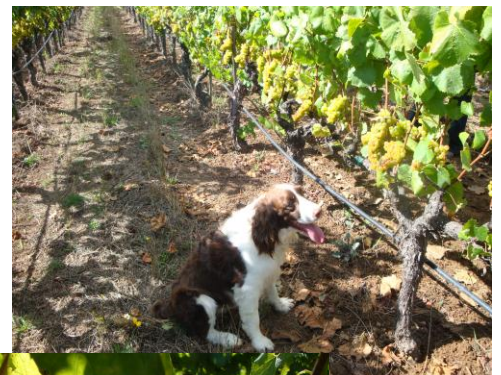


STARTING A COMPOST PILE WITH THE HARVEST RESIDUES: POMACE AND STEMS. THE GREY ONE IN BACK IS READY.



WE KNOW THE FRUIT IS RIPE WHEN CHICO AND BONITA RELISH EATING IT! CHICO WAS NOT HAPPY ON LEASH, BUT HIS RECENT LEG SURGERY REQUIRED IT ☹

WE KNEW THE CHARDONNAY WAS NOT READY BECAUSE BONITA DIDN'T WANT TO EAT IT! SHE JUST LOOKED AT IT WONDERING ...



BUT FINALLY IT RIPENED AND TASTED JUST FABULOUS!