



Message IN A BOTTLE

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

AUTUMN 2007

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2007 growing season has been near perfect

Now that crush is winding down and we are blowing out our sprinklers for the winter, I look back at a very busy year that was full of change. The first change for us was to engage the services of the San Francisco Wine Exchange (SFWE). They are a marketing firm in, you guessed it, San Francisco that deals with small family-owned wineries. With their help we revamped almost all of our distribution system. Instead of 20% of our distributors selling 80% of the wine, we have spread the load out to new areas and better distribution.

All of this great distribution, and you probably wonder why you still can't find our wines? It's all about supply. Chateau Ste. Michelle sells more wine in the morning than we do in a year. We are very small in the wine world. If you are unable to find our wine where you shop, please let us know and we can help you out.

The second change was the addition of Tim Henley as our winemaker. Tim joined us in June from Pine Ridge Winery in Napa Valley. He has really elevated the wine quality here at Gordon Brothers. The wines that he finished are superb, and I am looking forward to the day for you to try the wine he made this fall. We are all in for a real treat. We are constantly trying to make our products more appealing to our customers and Tim holds that same philosophy.

As we head towards the holiday season, we want to thank you for your support and encouragement. Truly enjoy your family and friends. May you have a blessed Christmas and a great New Year.

Cheers!

Jeff

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Irish eyes are smiling on Gordon Brothers wine

Last May, we had the great pleasure of meeting a couple from Dublin, Shane & Marguerite O'Dea. They were visiting some friends here in Washington State and made a stop by Gordon Brothers for some barrel sampling. They really enjoyed our wines, especially the Syrah.

It turns out that they have a group of friends who get together for dinner and wine tasting, and Shane was able to pick up a bottle of Gordon Brothers 2003 Syrah to throw into the mix. He found it at a wine shop called Vat 64 in Glasthule, South Co. Dublin, not far from his home.

We received an email from Shane revisiting his dinner experience. It reads:

"...our guests were all guys from work ranging from 25 to 50 years—all from the HR department in Ulster Bank, part of the RBS Group, with a nose for fine wine. The food on the night was Italian....dessert consisted of strawberries soaked in crème

de cassis, topped with fresh cream and warm almond slices. Marguerite's finest cooking at it's best!



Shane O'Dea

"Each person at the table had to present a wine, describe its colour, texture and notes were provided. We had only one French disaster during the meal—it should have been drunk about 8 years ago. The wines were from France, Austra-

lia, Spain and Washington State.

"The wines kept getting better and better as the evening progressed and we had two big hits, your excellent 2003 Syrah and a big French wine which I had picked up in St. Emilion whilst at the recent rugby World Cup in Bordeaux. Not to mention the noise decibels also increased dramatically during the evening and the agreed consensus was to phone you in Washington to extol the virtues of your excellent wine and invite you to our next tasting in Dublin. All were converts to the best kept secret in the wine world!"

Needless to say, we at Gordon Brothers are thrilled that people all over the world can experience what Washington State has to offer. We were also fortunate to meet such a genuinely nice couple who is helping us spread the word! Thanks, Shane & Marguerite!

Wine Club Selections

We are very proud of this Fall's wine club selections! We think they will make a great addition to your holiday meals. **From now until November 30th, we are offering 30% off case purchases of these two wines.**

2006 Reserve Chardonnay

We are proud to release our 2006 Reserve Chardonnay. The bottle itself has a little different look to distinguish it from the other wines, and I think you will find that the wine is also quite unique. We chose to decrease the cropload in our best block of Chardonnay to bring you this wine. It was barrel-fermented and aged in 100% new French oak. This is indeed a special wine.

Aromas of melon, peach and toasted coconut are followed by flavors of apple, Asian pear, dried mango and subtle creaminess. Try pairing this

wine with fresh salmon and a lemon-butter sauce or pork tenderloin roasted with apples and served with an apple-brandy cream sauce.

Supply is very limited on this wine, so be sure and order yours as soon as possible.

2005 Syrah

2005 was a special vintage. Aged in French & American oak barrels, our Syrah seems to get richer and bolder with each subsequent vintage.

Enticing aromas of cherry, dried blueberries and spice introduce themselves in this big, bold Syrah. Earthy flavors of cedar, leather, pepper and espresso linger into a well-balanced finish. Pair this beautiful Syrah with grilled, smoked leg of lamb or pepper-corn steak.

Cougar Gold & Mistletoe December 1 & 2, 2007

Join Gordon Brothers Cellars, the WSU Alumni Association, WSU Bookie, Sunwest Sportswear, Crimson & Gray, and more for a unique holiday shopping opportunity.

When: December 1, 10AM-6PM, December 2nd, Noon-4PM.

Where: Gordon Brothers Cellars Barrel Room

Cost: \$8; \$5 with your WSU Alumni Association Card

Cost includes a commemorative glass, wine tasting and light appetizers. We will be running some great wine specials so you can stock your cellar for Christmas!

For more information, please call or email us (509) 547-6331 or info@gordonwines.com.

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2007 Crush Report

By Tim Henley, Winemaker

Harvest is such a simple word, but one that has huge implications. Harvest can refer to many crops and types of activity, but for a winery and its winemaker it only means one thing: the grapes that have been carefully tendered all year long are finally ready to undergo transformation. Once the grapes have been gently harvested and transported to the winery, the winemaker's job begins in earnest. Scratch that! The work actually begins several months before. Last year's wine must be bottled, the cellar cleaned, and a plan needs to be formulated for the upcoming grape harvest. How many people will be needed? What supplies need to be purchased? Is all the equipment working properly? How many new barrels and what types should be purchased? These and many more are all questions that need to be resolved before a single grape is picked. Hopefully, all the pieces are in place before harvest begins. The next step is the waiting game. Walking the vineyard on a daily basis to determine what the vines are doing. Pulling grape samples and analyzing them for sugar and acid content. Daily tasting of the grapes to see how their flavor is developing and finally, more waiting.

This harvest snuck up on us. We knew it was coming but we also had lots of wine to get in the bottle before we could bring grapes in. Bottling took longer than expected with almost every piece of equipment on the bottling line acting cantankerously. Fortunately for us, they took turns instead of misbehaving all at once. I took this as the bottling line's way of saying "Hey, I'm done for the season. Let the crusher and the press take a turn." Their turn was coming sooner than expected. With an almost perfect August and beginning of September the Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc were racing to see who would get picked first. Sauvignon Blanc took an early lead and stayed ahead. We had nice flavor and sugar development in early September. With bottling still occupying the cellar I asked the grapes very nicely to wait a couple of days. They complied and we started harvest on the 11th of September. The morning was spent bottling up our first ever Reserve Chardonnay and all afternoon was dedicated to pressing the first grapes of the season.

Sauvignon Blanc took us all the way through to the 17th and hot on its heels was the Chardonnay. First to come in was the Reserve Chardonnay block. Located on the bluff right next to the winery we took the first 10 rows and lowered the crop level earlier in the season. This has the effect of concentrating the flavors in the remaining grapes and with a lighter crop load the vines had accelerated ripening. The Reserve Chardonnay was picked on the 18th and was gently pressed with only the early press juice going in to the program. This juice was settled overnight and the racked into a mix of brand new barrels for barrel fermentation. With cold settled juice and a lower than normal yeast inoculation this wine is just now finishing up with fermentation.

Near ideal weather and a bountiful yield kept us harvesting Chardonnay without a break until the 27th. At this point it was time to determine the next candidate. Sugars on the Merlot were climbing but the tannins and flavors on the Syrah were amazing. We decided to irrigate the Merlot and begin picking the Syrah. Irrigation in Washington is like magic. With the sandy soils here at Gordon Brothers, harvest irrigations are extremely predictable. Generally an inch of water was applied to the vineyard to delay sugar ripening. The vines would then take a day or two to figure out what had happened to them. 2-3 days later the sugar levels had dropped by 2%. I love Washington viticulture! With the Merlot being pushed back we began harvesting the Syrah. With the Syrah grapes we began to experiment with an extraction technique referred to as drain and return in addition to our normal punch-down technique. During a drain and return the entire volume of the wine is separated from the skins and held apart for a period of time. This allows a more thorough mixing of the tank contents and helps with complete extraction earlier in the wine making process. We also continued our normal cold soaking of the fruit prior to yeast inoculation. The cold soak allows for improved color extraction and improved fruit flavors in the finished wine. Our first batch of Syrah really demonstrated what a difference cold soaking can make. Upon crushing, the must (crushed grapes) had mild green olive aromas. After a mere 24 hour cold soak those aromas transformed into lus-

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2007 Crush Report, continued

By Tim Henley, Winemaker

cious berries. Toward the end of the Syrah harvest our perfect weather took a turn. The last of the Syrah was harvested in the cold and rain.

Normally weather like this might put a damper on things, literally. For us however, nature was on our side. While the Syrah was happily fermenting in our open top tanks, the Cabernet Sauvignon and the Merlot slowed to a crawl. Physical maturity was still progressing allowing for improved tannin structure but sugars actually decreased slightly through cool cloudy days and occasional rainfalls. As the Syrah finished fermenting, we started pressing off the tanks with a double settling and racking prior to going into barrels for the malo-lactic fermentation.

With a cellar full of empty open top fermenters it was time to bring in some more fruit, and the Merlot was ready. We started harvesting Merlot on the 15th of October and continued through the 19th, bringing in all but 10 rows that we saved as a hang time experiment. The Merlot also received a cold soak followed by drain and returns based on the success of the Syrah. Why stop a good thing? We did make one small change in the Merlot protocol. A couple weeks before the Merlot harvest I had the good fortune to attend a night class on the geology of the Columbia Valley. Amazing stuff! In addition to the geology portion there was another winemaker there presenting wines that demonstrate various terroirs of the Columbia Basin. After the class he had a few moments to talk shop. We discussed various yeast strains and he shared with me how he likes to ferment in 1-ton bins with hand punch-downs and multiple yeast strains. When the wines are finished they are pressed as one wine instead of being kept separate, with each yeast providing a different layer to the finished wine.

I had tried 1-ton bins at other wineries but had moved away from this type of fermentation feeling that extraction was missing. This new procedure intrigued me and an experiment was born. We tried a triple yeast ferment on our Merlot and the result was amazing. Upon pressing it produced wine with incredible depth and layers of flavor. Time has yet to determine what this wine will become but I am extremely hopeful at this point.

After the Merlot picking we still had two open tops available. These became the home for our first Cabernet Sauvignon pickings. With the winery full once again we turned our attention to the fermenting wines. Daily tasting, punch-downs, drain and returns and the occasional nutrient addition for optimal yeast health occupied our days as we waited for the tanks to finish fermentation. One by one they were pressed off, racked and barreled down in preparation for our final push.

The last week of October filled our available tanks with Cabernet Sauvignon. Finally the end is in sight!! At this point in the season, it has frosted in the vineyard almost every morning since the 26th of October. The leaves have all turned brown and are falling off. The vines are dormant and the remaining fruit is patiently waiting for us to harvest it. Soon the wines will be tucked away for the season in preparation for winter.

I forgot one minor detail. Our Gewürztraminer! With the success of the 2006 Ice Wine we have decided to continue with this program leaving the fruit on the vine until the temperature drops below 16 degrees Fahrenheit. When that will happen nobody knows. We have joked that it might be the first wine of 2008. Somehow I suspect we won't be joking if it truly takes that long to freeze. Cheers!

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