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courtship and vigilant enology

fall 2015

Godzilla

Today "Godzilla" is used mainly as an adjective used to describe things that are big, mean, radical and/or destructive. So what, you ask, does Godzilla have to do my Winemaker Newsletter in the fall of 2015? Quite a bit actually. No, we will not have another Godzilla harvest again this year. But we do have a Godzilla drought that has helped cause Godzilla wildfires, which would all be helped enormously by the impending Godzilla El Nino. Man that's a lot of Godzilla action; he's one busy dude!



2013 "Rocky Ridge" Rockpile Zinfandel

I will continue on with the Godzilla reference with our new fall Wine Club release of the 2013 Rocky Ridge Zinfandel from the Rockpile appellation. Wow is this big wine. I'm not just talking about alcohol here, but in terms of richness, intensity, varietal character and yummy mouth-feel it is a real beauty. The way this wine coats your palate with dense fruit and rich texture is impressive. The long finish just goes on and on carrying through with lingering flavors more like an expensive chocolate. 2013 is one of the big three vintages of the recent past (2012, 2013 & 2014) and a definite standout.

The Rockpile appellation sits on mountain tops above Lake Sonoma and stretches from the upper end of Dry Creek Valley north and west towards the coast. At most vineyard sites, which are all on fairly steep and rocky hillsides, you look down onto the azure blue lake below. Being above the fog line most of the time, the days here are bright and sunny all day, and surprisingly cooler than on the valley floor. The way Zin ripens here is truly unique in that there are fewer heat spikes, less raising of the berries, and long moderate days to languish in the sunlight. Mmm... bring on that Godzilla Zin! Sonoma County Harvest Fair judges must be Godzilla fans also as this wine won a coveted GOLD MEDAL in the competition.

2012 Alexander Valley Cabernet Franc

Our second Fall 2015 release is the 2012 Alexander Valley Cabernet Franc. This clone is the same as the Cheval Blanc clone in Bordeaux, France. It is a first growth clone, the highest level of prestige in Bordeaux. Grown in the warmer region of Alexander Valley where Cabernet Franc thrives, there are only 7 rows of this organically farmed fruit and Pech Merle has exclusive rights to them. This wine also won a GOLD MEDAL at the Harvest Fair this year!

Harvest 2015 - Update

This year the grapevines have finally decided to take a rest. After three successive large crops the 2015 yield is quite low, maybe as much 20-30% less overall in Sonoma County. The heat wave during the first week of September wasted no time in bringing the smaller crop to a high degree of

Harvest 2015 - Update (cont...)

ripeness very quickly. Many of us were caught off guard not expecting to have grapes ready to pick so soon. Nicely ripened white grapes with abundant character and rich dark reds with lots of complex flavors. Making wine in years like this makes you wish for more but still thankful of Mother Nature's bounty.

- Pech Merle harvested our first grapes, the Dry Creek Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier, before Labor Day weekend marking it our earliest harvest to date.
- The crop overall is very light in comparison to the last three vintages, all considered abundant. Some of our vineyard yield were down by as much as 50%, severely limiting how much fruit was harvested resulting in smaller case production and availability.
- On the upside, despite the smaller yield, the quality of the fruit is exceptional, with great flavor and color development. The wines promise to be flavorful and rich.
- Our Cabernet Sauvignon will be the last to harvest, coming in around Oct. 8-15. We expect to have most of the 2015 vintage in barrels by early October.

John Pepe
John Pepe, Winemaker

Introducing Jenna McDaniel

We are thrilled to announce the addition of our new Tasting Room & Wine Club Manager, Jenna McDaniel who is excited to represent us in our Geyserville Tasting Room.

Jenna was lucky enough to be born and raised in Healdsburg, California although her family legacy started in Geyserville at Hoffman House back in the 1900's. Jenna's initial exposure to the industry came from her uncle, Chip Lyeth, who owned Lyeth winery off of Chianti Road which was purchased by Silver Oak and then later acquired by Jean Charles Boisset.

"Wine has always been my number one passion since I grew up attending "stomp parties" in the heart of the wine country. I began my first venture into the wine industry in 2012 as the Tasting Room Manager at Marimar Estate in the downtown Sebastopol Barlow. After three years of management at Marimar Estate, I met Bruce & Cheryl and saw an opportunity to return to my roots in Geyserville. Representing some of the best wines in Sonoma County in a Tasting Room that celebrates the beauty and eclectic nature of California is a dream.

I have been an avid equestrian my entire life and starting showing horses at five years old. Today I spend my days fishing on the Russian River with a bottle of Pech Merle, my "vacation in the bottle". In the evening's you can find me at Diavola devouring Dino's famous Dictator pizza. I am honored to join the Pech Merle team and continue supporting my Hoffman family legacy in Geyserville.



Pech Pup Name: Lindsay (Lhasa Apso)

Favorite Varietal: Albarino, Zinfandel, Pinot Meunier, & anything bubbly!

Favorite Food: Everything! Especially "The Dictator" Pizza & Breadsticks from Diavola

Favorite Quote: "I only drink champagne on two occasions, when I'm in love and when I'm not." - Coco Chanel