



c.a.v.e.
courtship and vigilant enology

Winter 2013

Happy New Year To All Our Loyal Pech Merle Wine Club Members!

Last year at this time I opened my newsletter by asking about the rain, or lack of it I should say. The winter season started out as one of the most rain-free periods in many years. As 2012 wore on we realized it was an El Nino year and figured we were in for some surprises come Fall, Winter and Spring but not sure exactly how it would play out. Well, what a difference a year makes! This season it has been, to date, one of the wettest rainfall periods on record: ninth place in the last 30-years in rainfall ranking. For comparison Santa Rosa is at 19.76 inches this year vs. 4.24 inches last year as of Jan. 1. That is exactly five times more rain this year than last, a huge difference. And we like it that way, too. All of the reservoirs are full assuring a solid supply of drinking water, irrigation water for vineyards, and frost protection water, also for vineyards, for this coming spring when the vines wake up and tender green shoots emerge during the spring frost season.

And water is not the only thing in copious supply. The 2012 vintage was also a very generous vintage, biggest in about three years, and may prove to be the largest in California history once all of the weights and harvest figures are tabulated. For Pech Merle we ended harvest with approximately 25% more wine than expected due to the abundant crop in the vineyards we source from. Curiously enough these large and abundant vintage years also turn out to be outstanding quality vintages as well. That fact is counter intuitive since you would think a big crop means lower quality for all of those grapes hanging out there but it doesn't seem to work out that way. In 2012 we had an exceptional ripening period in which the long, warm days lasted right up to the end of October giving the vines a chance to bring that big load of grapes to full sweetness AND flavor! Given the chance the vines will live up to the great expectations we all had knowing there was a big crop and for that we are thankful. And now we have an abundant supply of water in the ground ready to nourish these vines once the growing season starts anew next spring. As usual I'm already excited about it.

The Oehlman Pinot is 100% Martini Clone from fully mature vines with a long history of excellent pedigree in one of the best Pinot-growing neighborhoods in the county. The vineyard encompasses about 22 acres of Pinot Noir of various clones, all over 25 years old, planted on the southwest-facing rolling slopes in this prestigious hillside area.

Alioto's Bench is an old mixed-black vineyard (known as a field blend) about 50 years in age which are well known in this area, most typically planted by the early Italian farming families of the early 20th Century. This vineyard, originally planted by the Fambrini Family started out larger than it is today but had an area of about 1/3 acre cleared for a home some 20 years ago. The vineyard is approximately 90% Zinfandel, 7% Carrignane, and 3% other varieties including Palomino, Sauvignon Vert and Petite Sirah. Both of these new wines will be available for sampling and futures sales during Wine Road Barrel Weekend the first two weekends in March, 2013. Of course as wine club members you will have first crack at them when they are released sometime in the coming years.

We look forward to seeing all of you again in the tasting room in 2013. Come on over, visit and stay a while we always love to visit with you! Happy and Healthy New Year to you and the family.



Cheers!

John Pepe

John Pepe, Winemaker