



# c.a.v.e.

courtship and vigilant enology

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Did you ever notice by the time Labor Day rolls around you start thinking about winding down all of the activities of summer and start to fantasize about autumn? Gotta put away the garden tools, clean and stack the patio chairs, fold up the patio umbrella, clean the BBQ – Uhg! Not to mention that the kids have gone back to school, the days are getting shorter, and the TV is full of fall clothing and Halloween ads. So what are we doing for Halloween this year, anyway? And what about Thanksgiving?

Well that is the way it is around the winery, too. Bottling is finished (whew, another vintage in the record books), organize all of the records and files from the 2012 wines, start to think about all of the fermentation supplies I will need for 2013, and figure out where all of the new barrels I ordered will go once they arrive at the winery. Oh yeah, don't forget about that crush pad that has been asleep for the past 10 months! Uncover all the crush equipment, get the bird nests and spiders out of everything and clean it up, pressure wash the Macro bins for grapes, and have the bin scale re-calibrated. Ah, here we go again with another fantastic harvest in Sonoma County, definitely the best two months of the year regardless of how the vintage turns out!

I have been busy in the vineyards for the past several weeks tasting and measuring sugar levels in the grapes. So far this summer has been one of the best for grape ripening in recent memory: no rain or heat waves and lots of sunshine providing a long hang-time for optimum ripening on the vine. The crop overall is not as large as last year but on the big side nonetheless. What is most different? The grapes have a significant amount of flavor earlier in the season at fairly low sugars. That portends a very rich and flavorful vintage with robust and delicious wines. Now all I have to do is harvest each vineyard at that perfect moment of development and make sure all of the fermentations go smoothly and without problems. In other words – don't mess it up!



One new and exciting thing for me and Pech Merle this harvest is that we are taking Zinfandel fruit for the first time from the highly regarded Rockpile appellation in the mountains above Lake Sonoma. I was fortunate enough to find one available acre of vineyard that was released by another winery. This was very surprising since I was told by everyone I asked "good luck" finding Rockpile fruit, there just ain't none available. Indeed, my search lasted for over two months, and I had pretty much given up and was only able to get on several waiting lists. One day the phone rang and the man on the other end asked if I was the guy looking to get some Rockpile Zin. Sure enough through a series of referrals and contacts he got my number from a colleague telling him that Pech Merle would do his fruit justice, be good people to work with, and produce an excellent product from his prized grapes. Who says networking doesn't pay off? And now I have something new to fantasize about. Rocky Ridge Zin here we come!



Cheers!

*John Pepe*

John Pepe, Winemaker