Beaux Frères

The Uncompromised Essence

of Mother Nature

"But first…are you experienced?" - Jimi Hendrix

Every harvest is different, but the 2007 harvest was one of those unique periods of time we look back on with amazement at what was accomplished, while in the moment it felt like we were simply doing what needed to be done. We were recently reflecting on the harvest from the safety of our cellar - tasting through the wines in cask, when the enormity of what we had accomplished hit us. 2007 had been a harvest to test the mettle of the most sanguine winegrower and yet the wines in front of us tasted supple, delicious and simply made us smile. Following our recent string of relatively painless vintages this one reminded us of Oregon harvests long past, the ones you hear the old timers talk about around the woodstove.

As we reminisced on past vintages the conversation came around to the history of winegrowing in the northern Willamette Valley and what it is that makes this area such a special place to grow Pinot Noir. In the late 60s when David Lett was scouting Oregon for suitable vineyard sites his academic peers thought him delusional. The prevailing school of thought was that the northern Willamette Valley could not support fine wine viticulture - it was labeled a "marginal climate". Since then we have learned that some of the very best wines come not from the center of the vine's comfort zone but those areas on the margin. Something about the tension of existing close to the edge hones a keen sense of individuality, balance and complexity.

Even though our 2007 growing season began with a cool, damp spring the flowering and fruit set were very good. In May and June the weather began to warm and July saw several minor heat spikes. August and September weighed in as primarily hot and muggy, and a final blast of dry heat propelled us into harvest.

Then the rains began…

One historical reason to question Oregon's validity as a place to grow grapes for fine wine is the likelihood of rain during harvest. In those early years the harvest conditions would make or break a vintage. Today however, improved viticulture coupled with diligent cellar craft have brought us a long way. This is not to say that the weather during harvest no longer impacts the wine, it certainly does. But thanks to these advances we are better prepared to embrace the diversity of vintage conditions and celebrate each year's unique personality.

Specific examples of our learning from vintages past - 1995 and 1996 were vintages with harvest conditions similar to 2007. Making wine over the years and watching these wines evolve has given us the perspective to better understand the 2007 harvest. In those earlier years we may have overcompensated with vigorous punch downs and high ferment tempertures in an attempt to extract more flavor and structure rather than stepping out of the way and appreciating the natural beauty that nature provided. With the 2007 vintage we used a gentler hand in the cellar, lighter punch downs and lower ferment temperatures. This more enlightened approach reflects an understanding of and trust in the vineyard - allowing the vintage to express itself more eloquently and honestly.

A Note on the Winemaking

Please remember that we use very traditional vinification techniques in the cellar. We do not fine or filter our wines before bottling. In addition we use the lowest possible levels of sulphur in our wines. To achieve this we intentionally leave higher concentrations of carbon dioxide, (CO_2) in our wines when we bottle. CO_2 is a by-product of fermentation and functions as a natural preservative protecting the delicate aromas and purity of fruit. If you are planning to drink these wines within two to three years from the vintage date we suggest a decanting for air as this quickly dissipates the CO_2 and allows the wine to open.