



POST-PORTUM

SONOMA VALLEY PORTWORKS 2007 VINTAGE REPORT



Paul bringing the petite sirah grapes into the cellar



Roger and Erik beginning the crush



Charlie helping with the crush



Bill and Laura pressing...Caryn working our press filter



Our cellar before the clean up...

The 2007 growing season was almost perfect - except for the last two weeks in October when the weather turned gray, cold, and wet. We consulted with the Heringer Family, our petite sirah grower, and together decided to wait until the weather broke before harvesting. The grapes were harvested in the early morning hours on November 1st, and delivered to our cellar by noon. Our gamble paid off. The grapes were in great condition and I got the higher grape sugars (28 brix) I like for making my ARIS port.

We ordered 6 tons of petite sirah, but because our grapes are the last to come off the vineyard, and because of the hand sorting the Heringers did at the vineyard, they were able to deliver only 5 tons. Because of the quality though, I was delighted!

After crush, the sugars soaked up to 30 brix - perfect for our port! We had a long, cool fermentation this year with the must temperature never going above 26 degrees centigrade. We continued our experimentation with encapsulated yeast. These yeasts are placed into mesh bags and dipped into the must to initiate the fermentation. In theory, the bags are removed, stopping the fermentation once the targeted sugar levels are reached. In the past, I haven't had much luck with this benefit (?). When we hit the targeted sugar levels, we pulled out the yeast bags and waited for the fermentation to stop...and waited.... It didn't stop. So, we had to start pressing immediately - beginning late Sunday evening, November 11th. As always, we pressed by foot to reduce the harsh tannins that can come from mechanical pressing.

We fortified the port using our unique solera wood-aged spirit. A solera is a continuous aging system that allows the average age of the spirit to increase every year. Our solera was started in 2003. and now averages 3 years in age. At *only* 150-proof, this spirit retains much of its grape character, adding complexity *and* maturity to the finished port. We finished pressing and fortifying on Monday November 12th.

After several days of settling, we transferred the port into neutral 60-gallon oak barrels. The port will rest in wood for at least 24 months before we consider bottling.

As always, we (myself, Erik and Brad) relied heavily on our winery neighbors (Paul, Scott, Don), friends (Charlie, Roger, Diane, Dave, Laura and Jack) and family (Caryn). This was Diane's fourth year helping. And, we gleefully welcomed back Deneice after a year's sabbatical in New Mexico.

-- Bill