

Whitestone Winery

115 N.E. Main St
Wilbur WA 99185

Newsletter #10
Christmas

"If you care to know, I tend to go through life with the Peanuts theme song running through my head and dancing like Snoopy"
Michael Haig

Stille Nacht Version

The air has become crisp and cool. My breath billows out from in front of me, and then quickly dissipates into the air. I am taking the back way up to the vineyard. Following game trails, never going straight, but always finding their way. Ignoring the trails, the dogs weave in and out of my sight, chasing one thing until another catches their fancy. The big chocolate lab, the puppy of the group, bounds ahead and behind the others, the energy of youth going twice as far to cover similar distance. The instigator, the blonde lab, always in front, leading the others into pratfall, but seeming to avoid them, crosses the trail in the far distance. Gazing back, the old black lab waits for me, but always moves on when I near, as if caught between the memories of youth and the realities of old age. And gamely trying to keep up with all is my little white Eskimo. Lord knows how a twenty-five pound heart resides in a twenty pound dog. A winter's sun warms me in the open spaces as I make my way up from the lake. It is me with my only co-workers, four dogs, miles away from any place or person, enjoying the silent stillness only a mid-winters day can bring.

During harvest, I take the road. During harvest, the complexities of life come down to; pick the grapes, crush the grapes, press the grapes, make the wine. Life is simple only in the focus of what must get done. And then, and then a time comes when I wake up and the wine is all pressed, the vineyard has been put to sleep, and that which has been driving me for the last two months has come to an end. The day after it is all done is always difficult; I seem at a loss of what to do. I look out the window; I can see snow at the top of the canyon. The water is so calm; it is hard to differentiate what is land and what is reflection. Only when a weary bird takes a respite from its long journey does a ripple appear in the illusion. I need to go to the vineyard today, like everyday for the past eight weeks, but I will not take the road.

In the ravine, inside the canyon, behind the vineyard, I make my way through a patch of snow. My boots crunch with each step I take, as I pass through an area which will be bathed in winter shade for the season. The whiteness of the snow, existing only in areas that receive no light, creates a continuous brightness on this sunny December day. A single crack of a falling piece of shale followed by the inevitable cascade of more breaks the silence. My eyes scan the cliffs on either side, looking for what missed step, what started the rock slide. Was it a deer or a bear? Curiosity drives my scanning eyes, searching for any glimmer of movement. A flash of light brown out of the corner of my eye, was it a cougar? Big Horn. Or I should say, Big Horns. First the blur of the one that I saw move comes into focus, next, as my eyes adjust, more seem to materialize out of nowhere on the cliff above. Soon, fifteen watchful pairs of eyes gaze upon me and my companions from above. I admire back, while my four furry friends remain focused on a scent closer by. After a pause in time, I continue following my path, up towards the back of the vineyard, the sheep move off, to where they must go.

The back slope of the vineyard climbs into view as I make my way out of the side canyon. The dormant vines, having lost their leaves stretch forth like lines of infantry in the cold, waiting. Clouds have encroached upon the sun. Silences and stillness engulfs the ten thousand shades of gray around me. Moving along the fence line, the pattern of the sentinel vines creates symmetry inside the vineyard. With the leaves having fallen, the placement of the vines becomes evident; each stands three feet from the one in front, three from the one behind, nine from those on either side. The symmetry creates perfect rows, in different directions, all depending upon where I stand. The reason for my sojourn to the vineyard appears in my sight.

Waiting for me is the tractor, done for this year's work, ready to be put away in the garage. Reaching the tractor, I reach out for the door handle, *click*, although not loud, the mechanical sound of the door lock releasing is alien in the surrounding silence. My hand grazes the key to the ignition and pauses, I take a moment, watch the dogs play, look for a glimpse of the sheep, breath in the stillness, hold the calm, hold, hold. I exhale. The ignition key turns, the engine fires up; I will be taking the road back down today, but not always.

I love this time of year. On Thanksgiving I make sure every radio is preset to the Holiday channel, I'm a geek for the Christmas tunes. I love the decorations, the lights, the ringing of the Salvation Army bells. I love going out and watching the people shop. Most of all, I love how people treat each other this time of year, strangers just seem to smile more. My Christmas wish for each and everyone this holiday season is to take a moment from the day and take a trail from your ordinary routine.

After a nice winter's walk, here are two of my favorite recipes to take the chill off.

Mike's Winter Hot Chocolate & Grandma Ruby's Christmas Snowball Cookies

Mike's Hot Chocolate

1 packet Hot Chocolate mix (I prefer Swiss Miss with the little marshmallows or Godiva dark Chocolate mix or Nestle milk chocolate mix or...)

1 cup warmed milk
1 1oz shot peppermint schnapps
1 blanket
1 loved one

Mix Hot Chocolate mix, milk and peppermint schnapps together in a big mug, stir. Place self and loved one underneath blanket and share drink. Dogs by crackling fireplace optional.

Grandma Ruby's Christmas Snowball Cookies

1 cup butter, softened
1 cup confectioners' sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups pecans, ground
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
2 cups flour

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Cream butter. Gradually add sugar and salt. Cream together well. Stir in pecans and vanilla. Add flour gradually and mix thoroughly. Shape into one inch balls. Place on ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 325 degrees for 15 to 18 minutes. Do not brown. Roll warm cookies in additional confectioners' sugar.

Holiday News

For this Holiday season, Whitestone Winery is offering a couple of holiday gift ideas for the wine lover on your list. We are offering a special 1/2 case deal (two bottles of our 2005 Merlot & Cabernet Sauvignon & 2 bottles of our Pieces of Red) for a flat \$140*. We are also offering special prices through December on the limited remaining bottles of our multi-award winning 2002 Cabernet Franc (\$16 per bottle) and our 2001 Merlot (\$12 per bottle). Our current releases:

2005 Cabernet Sauvignon \$32 per bottle
2005 Merlot \$28 per bottle
2005 Cabernet Franc *temporarily out of stock*
2002 Cabernet Franc \$20 *\$16 per bottle limited time*
Wild Bill Merlot \$13 per bottle

For 2007, Whitestone Winery and Sun Rock Bakery are looking to team up to bring you a series of **Brown Bag Lunch with the Winemaker**. This series will take place on various weekends throughout the year. Each lunch will focus on some aspect of the wine industry, from hiking the vineyard during spring pruning, to summer racking, to barrel tasting, to blending. There will be four of these throughout the year, each limited to 20 people, dates forthcoming. **\$25 per person**. Please email Michael if interested or to learn more.

Upcoming Winery Events:

January 8th The Artisan Room at the Ridpath Hotel in Spokane will be hosting a casual Happy Hour with yours truly. Come in after work with your co-workers and try a flight of Whitestone Wines and some great appetizers.

February 22nd Michael will be at Vino's in Spokane.

February 23rd "Mostly Merlot" Whitestone wines will be poured at this great yearly fundraiser event for Spokane Cancer Patient Care.

March 7th "Taste Washington with a Bling" Northern Quest casino will host this event to help out the kids of Wishing Star.

April 19th "The Barrel Tasting" Brats, Burgers, and a little lesson about wine at Whitestone Winery in Wilbur.

Your Special Event: I do private tastings and parties, at the winery, vineyard, and at your location.

Weekly Wine Tastings every Friday and Saturday at the tasting room in Wilbur

Christmas Wishes (Luke 2:8-14) and Holiday Cheer, Peace to all, no matter what your beliefs are this time of year.

Michael Haig

General Manager/Winemaker

Whitestone Winery

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Perfect Location, Perfect Wine

*Standard shipping rates apply