

Whitestone Winery

115 N.E. Main St
Wilbur WA 99185

Newsletter #13

"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat." Theodore Roosevelt

The Vintner's Vignette

The gravel digs into my skin through my t-shirt and jeans. Turning the oil drain plug the last distance on its threads, I hold the plug, blocking the impending rush of oil. My reflexes are not as fast as gravity and warm oil pours over my hand. Sliding out from underneath the tractor, I stand up, and use my clean hand to brush the dust off. My action only accomplishes the movement of dirt from one part of my clothes to another. Grabbing a towel, I proceed to wipe the oil off my hand. The oil blends in with my wine stained fingers. As the oil drains out, I watch Henry digging after some rodent, his chocolate haunches sticking up in the air. The rest of his body has disappeared into the hole he has dug. A sea of bright green extends out contrasting the yellow and gold of the surrounding wild wheat. A falcon rides the thermals above, circling, hypnotizing, enticing me to lay down in the shade of a row. Watch the world go by. I sigh, and climb back under the tractor to replace the oil pan plug, the day is still young and there is a vineyard to be mowed.



The stack of barrels rises above me on each side, five high, and offset in their cradles. A glass and a thief in one hand, empty fast food beverage cup in the other; pen clamped in my mouth, steno pad tucked in the back behind my belt. All items accounted, I stick out my elbows on each side, bracing against each stack, and hop up to the rim of the first row of barrels. The process repeats four times until I find myself near the ceiling of the barrel room, the top row of the barrel stacks on each side, emptiness beneath me. On top of a barrel, I place all the items that have made the trip up, balancing them on the curved surface. Grabbing the steno pad, I flip it open and turn the pages until a blank one appears. Serial number, vintage, and varietal type is recorded, before the pad is tucked back behind me. Pulling the bung out, I slide the thief into the hole, wait a breath, cover the end with my thumb and pull out the clear glass tube showing off its crimson contents. Into the wine glass I pour a sample, returning the rest of the thief to the barrel from which it came. A nagging rock has taken up residency in my stomach. The fear of not liking what I taste, of tasting a bad wine, of finding a spoiled barrel. Push away the fear, focus on the job at hand, what is it that I taste? Fruit? Chocolate? How young is the wine? Does it need more time or is it ready to be blended and bottled? I record my impressions, fish out from my pocket a chunk of bread and take a bite. As I cleanse my palate, my belongings and I shimmy down to the next barrel.



The steam billows and turns all around me as I work inside the small trailer. Steaming hot water cascades from each of the eight filler heads. Stepping out of the trailer, my sweat instantly turns to cold along my spine as the chilly spring morning strikes. The day is still gray, with the sun still minutes away from appearing. The streets of Wilbur are empty, areas of shade twinkle with light frost, possibly for the last night this year. The calm is briefly interrupted by the growl and then whoosh of a passing big rig on the highway, only to return as quick. Passing the steaming bottling trailer, I enter the barrel room, and grab my travel mug off the top of the water heater. Popping the top, I rinse the last bit of luke warm coffee out, toggling the trigger on the water gun, trying to not blast the mug away, while not scolding my hand. Rinsed out, I spin around and head to the big tank, shaking dry the mug as I walk. Grabbing the spigot I fill my cup. In two hours friends and family will be showing up at the winery to bottle the contents of this tank. One thousand three hundred gallons of wine that I have spent the last few years investing all of myself. In the blink of an eye, it will be out of my hands, I have done what I can. I sip from the mug and taste my toils.



The roof on the town community center creaks and pops above me as the cool night air contracts what the summer sun heated. An old air-conditioner's hum provides the soundtrack to the hall for tonight's town event. About fifty people fill the space before me; the town's mayor, chamber president, and head volunteer firefighter, all the same man, crosses the concrete floor to check-up on me. His appearance distracts me from my current thought of "Why amongst the standard 4-H and community fliers is there one for tsunami preparation in this farming town two hundred and fifty miles from the ocean?" He thanks me for coming again, and quickly heads off to greet another town resident just coming in from the fields to the local fundraiser. Before my attention can be returned to the bulletin board, a young man approaches the bar I am leaning against. He is in his early twenties; his appearance fits the mold of young country boy down to the belt buckle and wad of chewing tobacco bulging his lower lip. The beer glass in his hand is empty, but still shows the residue of wine I had poured in it earlier. Extolling his lack of knowledge of wine and the fact that he does not drink it he asks for more. I fill his glass and then spend the next half-hour talking about wine, each question asked, answered, leading to another, all the time brightening the face before me. On this night, someone new has discovered wine. Before he leaves, he says to me "I usually don't like anything other than beer, but this shit is good." Thank-you.



Staring out the window, I admire the rows of European sedans and SUVs. I am at an event for me, well actually not me, but my wine. The crowded room is here to taste the latest version of my red blend. Platitudes swirl around me as the happy guests enjoy the wine and each other's company. I appreciate the praise that comes and gratefully thank each deliverer. It is a room of connoisseurs, and that which I have created, does not take second to any, on this night, with this crowd. A well dressed gentleman carrying his recently purloined case purchase approaches where I stand. He has a request. In his cellar at home, he keeps a row of bottles of his favorite wine, each signed by the winemaker who created the contents. My blend is to join the shelf, if I would be so kind to sign a bottle. A silver Sharpie appears. I pull a bottle from his case, and hold it in my hands, pen ready to strike with some witty statement followed by my name. The pen slides smoothly along the glass, recording the strokes of my hand. I slide the bottle back in the case and shake the gentleman's hand. Asked what was recorded on the bottle, I smile and stay silent.



The rows of the auditorium have filled up in front of me. The number of students and guests is high considering the snow storm raging outside the building. These people have come to hear three people speak, well actually, they have come to hear the two gentleman sitting on my left speak, both preeminent alumni. I will be speaking first. I fiddle with a Diet Coke can, pulling it to my mouth, searching again for another sip from the long empty can, finding none. The can is quickly put back in place. Besides the can sits, vacant desk in front of me, no notes, no presentation, no PowerPoint. In a second I will fill ten minutes of the auditorium with just me. Ten minutes of free flow about what I know on the subject of wine. The students do not know who I am, but they will not forget me. Why? Because you can't fake passion. I smile to myself, and begin "It is not the critic..."

Recipe

Perfect Summer Back Deck Evening

For a nice change of pace, this issues recipe requires no cooking and just a little prep. Go to your favorite market's cheese section (I usually go to Huckleberry's on Monroe and speak with Drew) and choose three cheeses. One you know, one that is recommended by someone else, and a third completely random. Grab some fresh baked bread from a bakery. Slice the bread and cheese, open a bottle of Whitestone Wine and sit back on the deck and watch the sunset. Olives, crackers, peppers, and other small nibbles make nice additions or substitutions for the food.

NEWS

Silver Streaking! What does a winery do when it is off the beaten track to get attention? We enter competitions. Not just any, we submit our wines to the largest in the country. At these competitions, our wines go up against the best from the big boys in California, Washington, and the world before some of the highest rated wine experts in the land. Our 2005 Merlot recently won Silver at the Dallas International Wine Competition, the Inland Northwest Wine Summit, the Los Angeles International Wine Competition and the Riverside International Judging. Following the Merlot, our 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon received silver at Riverside, Los Angeles and the Northwest wine summit. Pieces of Red v.3.04 followed the Merlot and the Cabernet with Silver at the San Francisco International Wine Competition.

The second ***Brown Bag Lunch with the Winemaker*** will be Saturday, August 16th at the Winery. The focus of this lunch will be the creation of a red blend. Participants will sit down with Michael and create their own red wine blend. Taste how small amounts of Cabernet, Merlot, or Franc can change the structure, taste and feel of a wine. Guest will also receive lunch. ***\$25 per person, limited seating.***

DINE IN THE VINES

"Dine in the Vines" is back and will be on July 19th. The premier event takes place in Whitestone's scenic vineyard, where guests are treated to a live concert in the vines while dining on a gourmet meal and sampling past, present, and future Whitestone wines. Due to the intimate nature of this event seating is limited to just fifty guests. Last year this event sold out three weeks in advance, this year's event is almost sold out, call now to reserve your seat. ***\$125 per person.***

Upcoming Winery Events:

July 3rd & 4th No plans yet for the Fourth of July? Already have plans for the long weekend? Cancel them! Michael will be up at Sun Mountain Lodge for an incredible weekend of wine tasting followed by gourmet dinner

July 19th "DINE IN THE VINES!"

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

Can't get enough of the Whitestone Winery Newsletter? Check out our blog at <http://whitestonewinery.blogspot.com>. There you will find daily postings, writings and links to exciting stuff (like our Flickr page).

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