

WHITESTONE WINERY

"I've got to admit it's getting better"

Personal retrospect on the *Whitestone Newsletter*

"A little better all the time"

The Beatles from *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band*

Newsletter #16

"The Beatles Harvest Edition"

*Woke up, fell out of bed,
Dragged a comb across my head
Found my way downstairs and drank a cup*

I do not know the year, but the memory is the same. I wake up in the morning, tired, cold, but full of energy. It is day number...day number? I don't know. Harvest is underway. The Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon are in and fermenting, the first batch of Merlot is being pressed. Today we start the Franc. Time is not measured in days, but varietals, with each part of a timeline for the harvest season; Merlot picked (start of harvest), Cabernet fermented (mid-point of the season), Franc pressed (end of harvest). Eleven months of anticipation, one month of "Why do I do this to myself?" I take the thief and pull a glass of freshly pressed crimson liquid from a new barrel. One sip is all it will take to bring me back next year.

*You say you want a revolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world*

The cold bites through my clothes. I am dressed in layers, but no matter how many pairs of long under-wear, shirts, and jackets I put on, the cold always seems to find a way. Warm air from the lake is creating a mist that drifts and swirls, adding to the fog bank I can see blanketing the farmland above the canyon. I stop for a second in the gray morning light and peer across the mighty Columbia at acres and acres of grape land. But there are no grapes planted there. Just empty land. I am alone in a vineyard, alone in an area. I am either crazy or genius, or a little of both. Time will tell, but for now, time is pressing, I must finish prepping before the pickers arrive.

*As we live a life of ease
Every one of us has all we need,
Sky of blue, and sea green,
In our yellow submarine.*

Red shoes. Black socks pulled above the knee. Red shorts. Red hooded sweatshirt. Black stocking hat. My thumb scrolls through the music library on my iPhone. I think of the task ahead. Should I start another audio book? Listen to a tech podcast? Catch up on some radio programs? Or just crank the music to eleven? I tap shuffle on the music. The sun breaks from behind a cloud. I slide my sunglasses over my eyes as the music starts to play. I dance over to the harvest lug on the ground full of freshly cut grape clusters. In time to the beat, I swoop down; snatch the lug, dropping it into the trailer behind the four-wheeler. Hopping sidesaddle onto the machine, I punch the gas with my thumb, sending me rocketing down the row to the next lug. I sing, out loud, to eleven.

*Ob-la-di ob-la-da life goes on bra
Lala how the life goes on*

Tossing the last stack of recently emptied lugs into the trailer to be transported back to the vineyard, I hear the crunching of gravel behind me. Turning, I watch as my wife parks her little black car behind the grape bin trailer. We smile at each other as she opens the door, and our impatient little one, not waiting for my wife to exit the vehicle, bounds over her and comes running up to me. Before I have the time to scratch his head, he tears off, running and barking around the back lot of the winery. I kiss my wife on the cheek. She comments on my cold nose. The smell of hot pizza quickly captures my attention. We make a table of the tailgate to the truck and attack the food. We enjoy each other's company. The scent of pizza brings the dog back to my side. I give him my crust. My wife's driving dinner out to the winery is a brief interlude for both of us. Soon, I will have to get back to the grapes, and she, back to Pharmacy school. But for a minute in time, there is a clear night, under the stars, on the back of a truck, parked in a small town, blocking half the street; the greatest dining establishment.

It's been a hard day's night

And I've been working like a dog

Snap! The loud closing of the electrical circuit plunges the fermentation room into darkness. My eyes adjust to the only source of light in the room, heat lamps suspended over three fermentors. The smell of fermenting wine fills every nook and cranny of the warehouse. It is intoxicating. The light switches to the room are opposite the exit. I have to now navigate the five thousand square foot room in almost complete darkness. This walk is one of my most favorite things to do in the world. I am tired, cold, and sore, but surrounded by my labor of love. The stillness of the night, with the humming of the lights now died, the fermentors can be heard. I ease through the room, *crackle, crackle*, past each fermentor and slip out the door into the night.

*It's wonderful to be here
It's certainly a thrill
You're such a lovely audience*

Chinch-chick, Chinch-chick. Each crank of the pallet jack slowly lifts the four barrels into the air. These barrels seem so tiny in the cavernous room. All the fermentors and equipment is cleaned and stored away for the year. The harvest season is over. All that remains in the room and to do is to move these last four to their awaiting spot in the adjacent room, where they will join the rows of that year's vintage. I push the barrels across the floor towards the door. A long hot shower waits for me along with a bed, covered in clean, fresh sheets.

Recipe

I present the ultimate harvest helper - Coffee. Now the key to good coffee is the selection of the beans and the roasting level. There are many great coffee-growing regions of the world, let us first start by examining the history of the beans from the Central Coast of Costa Rica. Coffee was introduced to the region in the...oh let's be honest.

During harvest, we want it simple and strong. The simple part is easy; have someone else make it for you. The strong part is also easy, "Why yes, I would like an extra shot!" My personal favorite is a 24-ounce, triple shot, Pumpkin Spice Latte.

Upcoming Events

October 9th – Wine Club Release Party for 2006 Merlot at the Spokane Tasting room from 6 pm to 9 pm. Come enjoy appetizers and live music from Dayan Kai as we celebrate the grand release of our latest wine. Not a Club Member? Feel free to stop by and discover all the advantages of Club Membership.

October 28th – Whitestone Launch Party at Northern Quest Casino to celebrate the addition of our wine to the casino. Come join Heath for special pairings of our wine with appetizers and cigars at the Legends of Fire lounge at the Casino in Airway Heights.

October 31st – This is the BIG Event! Every year we shut down production during the middle of harvest for one day and invite the public to our production facility. Guests to this event get to try wine grapes, taste the wine as it is fermenting, learn all about how the wine is made, and get to try all our current releases. During the day, we also have the best brats and burgers cooking on the grill. To top it all off, we are releasing the latest version of Pieces of Red, v.6.022! Tickets are \$5 per person at the door (free for Whitestone Winery Wine Club Members).

First Friday – Make sure to stop by the Spokane Tasting Room the first Friday every month. We have live music and appetizers from 5:30 pm to 9:00 pm. Meet up with friends, try some great wine and kick off your weekend in style.

Michael Haig
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"There are places I remember all my life"

John Lennon

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