

Wines & Vines

Notes from the Winemaker...

There is an old adage in winemaking that goes "Great wines are made in the vineyard: and now that we are finishing my 10th year as a winemaker, I am beginning to understand the full meaning of this statement. Truly, if the grapes come into the winery with good color, full, ripened and in balance, then the role of the winemaker is to "not screw things up."

The French have a term "Terroir" you may already know about. There is no English language equivalent term and it is used to describe the total of all the growing conditions of any particular vineyard. It is the sum total of the soil, the climate, the orientation of the vineyard to the sun, virtually everything that impacts grape growth and development. The terroir of Winnett Vineyards is well-suited for producing some very fine wines.

Let me describe our terroir here at our vineyard. First, the soil: like many great grape growing regions of the world, our little project started on a pile of rocks. Not just any rocks, but soft sedimentary rocks from ancient sea beds, shales and limestones fractured and broken are strewn across all of our rows of vines. We use unique cultivation techniques and specialty tractor tools yet they still take a terrible beating and are quickly destroyed by all of those darn rocks! However, the drainage of the soil is perfect as a result, and the vines are stressed just enough to produce very flavorful fruit. The minerals from the ancient rocks add distinctive flavors to the wines, for example, a little "flintiness" to the Sauvignon Blanc.

Our climate really is Mediterranean. We have two distinct seasons, wet and dry, and right now it is raining buckets! But, during the grape ripening part of our year, we have sunshine and heat during the day with refreshing cool ocean breezes coming up our river valley at night. The warm days and cool nights work magic in producing lots of sugar in our fruit but miraculously maintain flavor and acid for the balance we look for in high quality grapes.

Our vineyards' orientation to the sun is perfectly suited for maximum solar exposure. We are perched on a southern sloping bench almost 1000 feet above the valley floor. The sun strikes our vines early in the morning and the vineyard is the final spot of illumination in the valley as it sets late in the evening.

The "terroir" of Winnett Vineyards is great for growing grapes. Note to David: "Do NOT screw them up!"