

February - March 2005

Arthur Earl Winery

Society Pages

Winter Routine

We have survived the holidays and accepted the fact that it is another new year, so we have finally settled into our winter routine. Our first bottling of the year is over, the 2004 Pinot Grigio and Viognier are in the bottle. Now, we turn our attention to the rest of the 2004 vintage, which receives its first racking. The wine is carefully removed from the barrels it has been in since harvest, leaving behind the solid matter (lees) that has settled from the wine. While the wine blends in a stainless steel tank, the lees are dumped and the barrels thoroughly washed with hot and cold water. The wine is then returned to the barrels for three more months of aging before the process is repeated again. Shortly after all the 2004 wines have been “racked”, we will begin working on the wines for our May bottling. Those of you in California are well aware of the weather we have been having, and those of you in the rest of the country have probably heard about it on the news. With a few weeks still to go in our rainy season, we are just short of three times the average annual rainfall, and most of it has come in just two periods of extended rain. For those of you familiar with Lake Cachuma, the reservoir you drive by on Highway 154, you probably noticed how low it had gotten. At Christmas time it was about two-thirds empty. That all changed with our first major storm cycle when in just eight days the floodgates were opened. With the second storm cycle, it was necessary to open the floodgates to their maximum. Estimates I have seen say that enough water has flowed out of the lake so far to almost fill it again. So far it has had little effect on the vines, but any hard rain from now on may hurt the crop. Hope to see you soon. Art

This Month's Wines

As you know, Arthur Earl focuses on producing red wine varieties native to the Piedmont region of Italy and the Rhone valley of France. This month's shipment includes one of each. Nebbiolo has been our most popular wine since we first introduced it in 1999, which is a pretty good run. In my humble opinion, it is the best red variety from Italy, being the only variety used in the great wines of Barolo and Barbaresco. The Italians have figured out that Sangiovese is a much better wine when blended with something else, usually Cabernet, Merlot or Syrah, but Nebbiolo needs no such help. The second wine is Mourvedre. A relatively minor variety in France, the grapes we get produce unique flavors that have made this wine a success from its first vintage. Like the French, we also blend some into our A Genoux, but as long as you keep buying it, we will continue to offer it as a stand-alone variety.

2002 Nebbiolo ~ Stolpman Vineyard ~ Santa Ynez Valley ~ Santa Barbara County

This is the newest vintage of our Nebbiolo. As usual we see some variation from vintage to vintage. 2002 was a year in which we increased our production of this variety. The grapes were picked a little earlier than usual and the wine has a bit more acidity than recent vintages. The wonderful cherry flavors are still there. Each year I try to make this wine a little more “Italian” while maintaining the cherry-like richness that makes this wine so popular. The way this wine finishes makes me think I am on the right track.

2002 Mourvedre ~ Paso Robles

The fruitiness of the grapes is especially noticeable. I find the stone fruit flavors of apricots and peaches to be a bit unusual in a red wine, but the result is a thoroughly enjoyable wine. This wine is typical of our “style”, with great color, full mouth feel and forward fruit. About 240 cases made.