

October 2004

Arthur Earl Winery

Society Pages

Early Start, Early Finish

It is hard to believe, but our harvest started very early this year. We received our first grapes on August 19, the earliest we have ever received grapes by almost two weeks. This is mostly the result of a very warm spring, which got the grapes off to a very fast start. Summer has not been a hot one, but it has been warm enough and there has been lots of sun so the grapes just kept on maturing. Early in the season we were getting grapes with high sugar levels that were not quite ripe physiologically. Now, late in the season, we are getting really ripe grapes, but with lower sugar levels than we have come to expect. The later harvested grapes are also showing some signs of dehydration as we leave them on the vine as long as possible to try to get sugar levels higher. This means that these varieties have the potential to produce some exceptional wines. These grapes have a high skin to juice ratio that should produce some really concentrated flavors. Unfortunately, this means reduced yields of wine, which can mean higher prices. All in all, this is good news for Arthur Earl customers, as the last varieties we picked were Nebbiolo and Barbera, which are two of our most popular varieties. We are very fortunate that our Barbera was picked on Friday, October 15, just before the early rains came the next day. Some varieties will stand up well to some rain, but Barbera is not one of them. It now looks like we will be just about finished with harvest by Halloween. That is by far the earliest date in my 13 years of winemaking. Art

This Month's Wines

Zinfandel was one of our best selling wines last year, finishing within a few cases of the Nebbiolo. When we released the new Barbera in June, it quickly became the best selling wine of the summer. They are also the wines we are sending you this month, so there is a pretty good bet that you are going to like them. Both are new releases (early June) and both continue our tradition of fruity red wines with great body. The 2002 Barbera is a very full-bodied fruity wine, that just plain tastes good. The Zinfandel is once again a big wine with lots of up front dark fruit flavors. Both of these wines are still babies in their bottle maturity, so while they will taste great if you drink them right now, do not be afraid to keep them for a few months if you wish.

2002 Barbera

Barbera is an Italian variety, produced throughout the Piedmont region, and is, in fact, the most planted grape by far in that part of Italy, and in other parts of the Northwest. Italian Barberas can be very dark in color and equally full-bodied, even heavy and acidic, or sometimes lighter and fruity, but Barberas produced in the coastal regions of California are softer in tannin and acidity. This version is a full-bodied but soft-textured wine with minimal tannins. It exhibits wonderful aromas and flavors of fruit, mostly cherry, and is a pleasant, easy drinking, red wine that is very food friendly. 212 cases made.

2002 Zinfandel

Zinfandel is considered the most American of grapes. Although its DNA has been matched to the Primitivo grape of southern Italy, its origins were more likely in the eastern European areas of Croatia. The nose of this wine is definitely Zinfandel. The great aromas of fresh fruit can not hide that unique aromatic nuance that one recent taster called "Zinfandel funk". The raspberry aromas highlighted on the nose explode into flavor on the palate. Although somewhat muted on the nose, the peppery quality of many good Zins shows up on the palate. Jammy fruit at the start gives way to a smooth finish, as the lower alcohol level of this vintage does not grab your palate the way the 2000 vintage did. As well as this wine is showing at its release in June 2004, it will continue to mature and age well for some time to come. About 265 cases made.