

September 2004

Arthur Earl Winery
Society Pages

Early, Early, Early

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. What we are seeing so far is grapes with sugar levels that say it is time to pick, but in reality the grapes are just not quite ripe. This means we will wait a little longer and pick with higher sugar levels, meaning wines with slightly higher alcohol levels. While most of our varieties are running about two weeks early, our Zinfandel came in a full forty days earlier than last year. The really hot weather at the end of August and the beginning of September made all the early grapes that are usually spread over three weeks get ripe at the same time. As you might expect, this has produced quite a scramble. The growers scramble to get everything picked at once, and the wineries scramble to process it all and find room for some many fermentations at one time. Finally, just in the last few days, most of these early grapes are in and the weather has cooled off quite a bit so all of us can catch our breath and catch up on our production. Hope to see you all soon in the tasting room. 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.