

LEGENDS OF STAG HOLLOW

As heard through the grapevine...

(May, 2015) Volume 18.1

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Greetings from the Hollow,

North-westerners know it has been a very early spring. With bud break occurring about 3+ weeks early, the race to harvest is off to a furious pace. Indeed, Mother Nature has put grape growers on alert. Destiny: an early September harvest? The last time that happened was 1992. Implications of early harvests can be full of twists and turns, which require careful navigation.

This spring we were delighted to encounter two new bird species at our 10-acre nature reserve adjoining Stag Hollow Vineyard. A celebration moment, as Acorn Woodpeckers took up residency. We have been waiting patiently since 1989 when we purchased our 34-acre site for this highly social species to disburse from oak woodlands a few miles away where they nest. Restoration of an oak savannah below our Tempranillo block by our neighbors, the Hirschy Vineyard, was the missing piece of the habitat puzzle, as the woodpeckers showed up soon thereafter. In late March, we heard a repetitive toot-toot whistled every evening for about two weeks and then it stopped. By listening through "call sounds" on our bird ID phone-app we found an exact match: the Northern Saw-Whet Owl. It's unknown if this tiny, highly nocturnal, and seldom-seen owl found its mate and is quietly living in our backyard or was just passing through.

Those who have journeyed to Stag Hollow Vineyards know it's worth the trip. The peaceful and secluded locale embodies our personable and laid-back style and our ridge top vistas of bucolic farmlands framed by 3,000 foot peaks outlining the Coast Range complement our site-expressive wines. We look forward to seeing you soon at Stag Hollow during your annual migration to Oregon wine country.

Memorial-Day Holiday Seasonal Tastings

Pre-Memorial Day Weekend

(Private tasting--mailing list customers)

May 16 & 17 (Saturday & Sunday)

Noon to 4 PM

Memorial Day Weekend

(Public tastings)

May 23 & 24 (Saturday & Sunday)

11 AM to 5 PM

May 25 (Monday--Memorial Day)

Noon to 4 PM

All tastings are \$10 and reimbursed with purchase \$75 or more per person.

Map, directions, or other information about Stag Hollow and its wines can be accessed at **Staghollow.com**. At these tasting events, Stag Hollow will offer tastes and purchases of the following:

- **Futures Tasting and Purchase:** 2014 *Reserve 777/114* pinot noir
- **New Release:** 2013 Field Blend *Rosé*
- **Recent Releases:** 2012 *Yamhill-Carlton* and *Reserve* pinot noirs and 2011 *Vendange Sélection* pinot noir
- **Notable Vintage Comparison:** *Reserve 777/114* pinot noirs from the 2009 and 2005 vintages (library selection) will be paired with 2014 *Reserve 777/114* futures selection
- **Special Sale:** 2010 Gold-medal winning Dolcetto

Fresh Carlton Bakery bread and a gourmet selection of cheeses from Harvest Fresh will be served.

2014 Pinot Noir Futures

Bruce Graham, wine steward with Zupan's Markets (retired), recently joined us for our first "blind" barrel tasting of 2014 pinot noir wines. As a sneak preview to the vintage, this two-day event, which included 64 different barrel samples, was all smiles because the vintage showed superbly across the board. Looking back, the 2002 vintage was the last time we experienced a tasting that showed such forward wines combined with consistent high quality only six months after harvest.

The 2014 vintage is already on its way to be among our finest, no doubt. With so much excellent wine from this vintage, we decided to initiate futures offerings of pinot noir at the upcoming Memorial Day holiday tastings, six months earlier than usual. More details and stories about the 2014 vintage will appear in our annual fall newsletter.

The Stag Hollow *Reserve 777/114* is the first pinot noir to be offered from the 2014 vintage (limited to 50-75 cs). Barrel tasting notes of this wine include bright raspberry and dark cherry notes, spicy, earthy, big rich flavors, showing some tannins, and a long finish. Futures price for the 2014 *Reserve 777/114* is \$192 @ 1/2 case (\$32.00/btl) and \$348 @ full case (\$29.00/btl). (Please call to secure future purchase if you can't make it to Stag Hollow over the holiday tastings)

Update on Wine Inventory

Several wines have sold out since our last newsletter. They include the 2012 Stag Hollow *Vendange Sélection* pinot noir and 2014 Tempranillo, both selling out during our futures sales and at Thanksgiving seasonal tastings, as well as the 2011 Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir. Of note, 2012 Yamhill-Carlton and Reserve pinot noirs currently are in good supply. We also bottled a special 75-case lot from the 2013 vintage selected for possible futures offering. The wine will be available after additional bottle aging.

And Now for Something Completely Different

After 20 vintages, the stars lined up in 2013 to go for it: our first *rosé*--crafted the Stag Hollow way.

Let's start with why? We enjoy a starter wine, a dry aperitif, for the kitchen chefs (i.e., Jill and Mark) to sip while preparing dinner. You ask: I thought the Stag Hollow muscat filled that niche? It did until Mark decided to change trellis systems in the muscat ottonel block to improve vine flowering by cutting the top off of every vine to sprout new trunks and shoots. That drastic action took our muscat out of production for two vintages, 2013 and 2014. Our muscat is back on track ready for the 2015 vintage (sales in late 2016). The muscat void became a *rosé* opportunity. However, we set a strict condition for this *rosé*: it must be made in a style that red wine fans would enjoy! Hmm...high bar to achieve.

Rosé is all about color; it's a wine with a hue that isn't dark enough to be considered red. That's it. There are three primary ways to achieve a rose-colored wine: skin contact, tank bleeding, and blending. For the skin contact method, red grapes are crushed and placed into a tank for 1-3 days before fermentation allowing the red color from the grape skins to slowly permeate into the juice before draining and pressing the skins to the desired juice color. For tank bleeding, also known as *Saignée*, a modest amount of juice is drained from red wine fermenters a few days after crushing. The juice that is removed is used to make a *rosé*, whereas the remainder, now with a high proportion of grape skins relative to the volume of juice, is used to make a red wine. The *Saignée* approach is popular in Oregon with rainy vintages. As for the blending method, you guessed it; a modest amount of red wine is added to a white wine to produce the desired color and flavors.

We resolved that these three approaches would not make it over the "high bar," so, time to be creative. We then rationalized that fermenting red and white grapes together would gently introduce complexity through the extraction of grape skin flavors and supple tannins from grape seeds and skins. We also rationalized aging the *rosé* in neutral barrels, and since we're crafting this wine similarly to a red wine

we might as well go all the way (heresy, we'll be burned at the *rosé* grape stake).

The trickiest part, especially without prior experience, was to estimate what proportion of red and white grapes should be fermented together and still end up with *rosé* color. For our maiden voyage, we settled on a 50-50-fermentation blend consisting of 50% chardonnay, 35% pinot noir, and 15% tempranillo. Once in the fermenter together churning toward "dryness," there is no turning back. In retrospect, the contribution of tempranillo was a bit darker than anticipated, which tilted the extracted color--while still in the range of a *rosé* -- towards a light-colored pinot noir. Even so, it worked. The end result is a hearty, but not heavy wine that is complex, showing nuances of strawberries and citrus, with an apple-mineral finish. Upon recently taste-testing Jill's mom on the *rosé*, she exclaimed: "this is a good fit as my everyday wine!" Meanwhile over the last few months the inventory of this *rosé* shrunk by 2.5 cases as the chefs in our kitchen have been raiding the supply. We saved 60 cases for you, decided to label it as Field Blend *Rosé*, and sell it at a direct-to consumer price, \$11.00/btl and \$9.35/btl at case price.

News bites (so little space left)

A Stag Hollow wine club is coming! We are close to launching. If not by Memorial Weekend, then by Labor Day weekend, the next time we'll be open for tastings (not by appointment) to introduce one or more new wines.

Our featured library wine over the Memorial Day holidays tasting will be the 2005 777/114 *Reserve* paired with 2009 777/114 *Reserve*, both excellent selections. We have enough inventory of the 2009 777/114 *Reserve* pinot noir to offer a special pricing of \$36/btl; case price @ 15% off is \$30.60/btl in mixed or solo case. The 2005 vintage is in very limited supply, selling at \$95/btl, with a limit of 1 per customer (sorry, no additional discount in a mixed case).

Over the last year we have been so thrilled about showing-off our estate-grown 2012 Dolcetto (yum) that the final 20+-case-inventory of the 2010 dolcetto is feeling neglected. With the remaining inventory of the gold-medal winning 2010 Dolcetto desiring to find a home soon, we are pricing this very appealing Dolcetto at the astonishing (buy me) price of \$15.00/btl (\$4.00 off); case price is **\$12.75**/btl in mixed or solo case.

....Don't miss this one; the 2010 Dolcetto is our big sale item for the Memorial Day Holiday tastings.

*See you at the vineyard.
Cheers, Jill and Mark*