

LEGENDS OF STAG HOLLOW

As heard through the grapevine...

(November, 2016) Volume 19.2

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Connecting with Stag Hollow
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www.staghollow.com
Open for public tastings Labor Day,
Thanksgiving, and Memorial Day Weekends

Thanksgiving-Holiday Season Tastings

Jill, Mark, Nyssa, Brix 🐾, and the many friends who help in the tasting room invite you to one of six tastings at Stag Hollow during the Thanksgiving holiday season:

Weekend before Thanksgiving

(Private tastings--mailing list customers)

Saturday & Sunday*

November 19 & 20*

Noon to 4 PM

**offered for those who prefer smaller gatherings*

Weekend after Thanksgiving

(Public tastings)

November 25 & 26

Friday & Saturday, 11 AM to 5 PM

November 27

Sunday, Noon to 4 PM



First Saturday in December

(Private tasting--mailing list customers)

December 3

Noon to 4 PM

**All
tastings
are
\$10.**

**Tasting fee reimbursed with purchase
of \$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:

- **Vendange Sélection Pinot Noirs:** 2006 (from our Wine Library), 2011, and 2015 (futures purchase).
- **Reserve Pinot Noirs:** 2014 and 2015 (futures purchase).
- **Tempranillo:** 2015 (futures purchase)
- **New/recent releases:** Field Blend Oregon Special Selection II (new), 2012 Field Blend, and 2013 Dolcetto d' Yamhill Superiore.
- **"Customer Appreciation" Sale:** 2010 Yamhill Villages Pinot Noir

Christmas gifts on sale: Exquisitely handcrafted Red Rooster wooden pepper mills, and spice and coffee grinders priced 25% off.

Greetings from the Hollow:

What a roller-coaster ride 2016 took us on for weather; it was unlike any vintage that we can recall. In our May newsletter we revealed that the vines awoke from their winter respite very early by breaking buds well before March Madness had passed, as average February temperatures soared to 5 degrees above normal. Then in April temperatures climbed again to about 5 degrees above normal that rapidly accelerated vine-shoot growth at rates more like June. Tales were being told that 2016 could be the earliest harvest ever, and it was only May.

May brought in a calmer weather pattern that settled in for 3+ months, cycling back and forth every 2 weeks or so between periods of slightly above average temperatures, with an occasional one-day spike in the 90s, followed by a period of below normal temperatures. Ideal conditions to ripen pinot noir. We'll take it! Even so, this long stretch of mild weather did not alter the course that was decisively set by the unusually warm February and April; we were destined for a very early harvest.

Everything changed on August 11th, just two days before Mark ran in the Oregon Wine Half Marathon. Temperatures rose into the 90s for 12 of the next 16 days, including three days hovering at 100 to 102 degrees. This heat spell was exceptionally long for late in a growing season in northern Oregon, especially in a vintage with an early grape harvest looming.

For irrigated vines or vines growing on sites with deep--less stressful--soils, the hot weather picked up the pace of grape maturation. By late August, grape growers around the Willamette Valley were frantically starting to harvest their crop with hopes of keeping sugar-levels from getting too high, which could result in high-alcohol, unbalanced wines. A sound harvest strategy, indeed, though it does come with some risks to quality.

If hot weather prevails as harvest approaches, grapes often produce sugar faster than key flavor compounds. Harvesting grapes before these complex flavor compounds fully develop can result in big up-front fruity pinot noirs, but they may lack sufficient depth for long-term aging (California-like style).

Not surprisingly, a lot of hand-wringing was going on at Stag Hollow over the prospects of harvesting so early. In a twist of fate, Mother Nature had a different harvest journey for us. Rather than accelerate grape development, the hot weather actually slowed grape maturation at Stag Hollow. We ended up harvesting our pinot noir grapes substantially later than most warm-site vineyards, though at a quality level that exceeded our expectations.

What happened? Water probably became too limiting during the heat wave, thus reducing our vine's photosynthetic capacity. We dryland farm pinot noir vines at a very high planting density, 2 to 4 times higher than most vineyards, which intensifies root competition for water and soil nutrients. Apparently, while under this high water-stressed state the vines walked to the harvest finish line rather than ran.

At this measured pace, the vines could take advantage of September's cooler temperatures and some welcome rain. This was perfect ripening conditions for pinot noir vines that clearly were out for a stroll. We harvested pinot noir in two shifts: the Dijon clones from September 12-17 and the Pommard clone on September 28. The flavors and sugar levels for each harvest were perfect.

Thank goodness our pinot noir, muscat, tempranillo, and dolcetto grapes were in the fermenter by October 1 because skies turned gray after that. Mother Nature seriously began to transition from an El Nino to a La Nina climate pattern in October--usually an important month for harvesting grapes--by scoring measurable precipitation on 28 of 31 days and setting widespread rainfall records exceeding 10 inches. Not so good for grapes. However, most Oregon wineries were done with harvest by the end of September and were thankful for the abnormally early harvest.

2014 Pinot Noir Futures--Ready!

Our 2014 Stag Hollow pinot noirs, bottled in September 2015 and then bottled aged a year, are now ready to be picked up for futures customers at the tasting room during the upcoming six tastings.

In 2014, a fabulous Oregon vintage, we made all three of Stag Hollow's reserve level pinot noirs for the first time since the 2005 vintage: the *777/114 Reserve*, *Reserve*, and *Vendange Sélection*. These wines are delicious: big and rich, yet balanced. All along, these wines have been really approachable throughout their development, though surprisingly the 2014s went through a closed-in stage recently during this past summer. Not to worry; we tasted the '14s in early November and they are back.

The 2014 vintage was our largest futures sales ever. We truly look forward to seeing you and handing over these wonderful wines for your safe keeping and enjoyment. During the holiday tastings, we'll be pouring tastes of the 2014 *Reserve*. The *Reserve*, *777/114 Reserve*, and

Vendange Sélection will be available for purchase at \$50/btl and \$42.50/btl at the case price.

Vintage Reflections: Cool versus Hot, and 2015

Climate change aside, there are few wine regions on the earth that can cycle from warmth to coolness between vintages and annually deliver distinct yet compelling wines like Oregon. Looking back to 2009 as a starting point: this was a year when records were set for warmth and number of days over 90 degrees. What followed was remarkable. The climate shifted to the other extreme, with two of the coldest vintages in decades. Then, there was a steady climb of increasingly warming years through 2016, starting with 2012 as a transition year (not too hot and not too cold) that is far better known for yielding very concentrated wines due to over 100 straight days of no rain, and peaking in 2015, a record-setting year for heat units that exceeded 2009. And yes, 2013 was a warm vintage, warmer than 2012--though rain-affected.

At the upcoming holiday tastings, we will be pouring samples from the record-setting 2015 vintage and offering futures purchases of *Reserve and Vendange Sélection* pinot noirs. What is notable about this vintage is we did something different in the vineyard that enabled us to make high quality, age-worthy pinot noirs from a challenging vintage.

Let's back up to the beginning of August in 2015. By this time, it was clear that an early harvest was approaching and the vintage had been hot: we already endured 21 days over 90 degrees with more on the way. At this time of year, we usually traverse the vineyard cutting clusters off the vines to enhance ripening of the crop before fall rains set in. Considering that we had the largest crop hanging in the vineyard since the huge vintages of 2009 and 2006, perhaps crop thinning should be the *modus operandi*. Based on experience, we instead saw the larger crop as opportunity to enhance quality in an early and hot vintage rather than as a liability. So we kept the full crop in hopes of delaying harvest to mid-September when the weather should be cooler and more amenable to pinot noir. In addition, we surmised that the heavier crop should help to spread out the sugar production to more fruit, keeping sugars from spiking and buying time for flavor compounds to develop. We are pleased to report that it worked: pinot noir harvest took place much later than originally expected, from September 14-20, and sugar levels stayed within our desired range given the hot vintage, mostly around 24.5 Brix.

For the upcoming tastings, we decided to compare the 2015 *Reserve and Vendange Sélection*, with other vintages. One of our favorite comparisons that exemplifies Oregon is a cold versus hot year. It doesn't get much better than contrasting 2011 (cool year) with 2015, especially given the ~40% difference in annual heat units between vintages and the 40-day difference between harvest dates! We'll pair *Vendange Sélection* pinot

noirs (*Pommard* clone) from the 2011 and 2015 vintages, as well as from the 2006, our cellar selection for the tastings.

The 2006 vintage was a rather warm year in which we thinned the crop. In this vintage, the sugars raced ahead of the flavors, probably because of the lightened crop. Because of this, we paused and waited for the flavors to catch up before harvesting. This decision gave rise to very big-styled pinot noirs from that vintage.

For the tasting, we'll also pair the 2015 *Reserve* with the 2014 *Reserve*, juxtaposing the two warmest vintages since 2009.

Futures offerings of the 2015s are set at prices below wholesale rates. Stag Hollow's futures price for the 2015 *Reserve and Vendange Sélection* pinot noirs is \$192 @ 1/2 case (\$32.00/btl) and \$348 @ full case (\$29.00/btl). The wines will be released in November 2017.

The 2011 *Vendange Sélection* pinot noir is on special sale price of \$35/btl (\$5.00 off) and \$29.75/btl in solo or mixed cases. The 2006 *Vendange Sélection* pinot noir is priced at \$80/btl (sorry, no further discounts in case lots).

These prices are available through January 15, 2017.

Field Blends

Blends? This is a first: two new *Field Blends* in one year. Earlier this year we released the 2012 vintage *Field Blend*. It's a co-fermentation blend of pinot noir, dolcetto, chardonnay, leMBERger, and tempranillo. This is an impressive *Field Blend* for those who seek a bigger styled red blend at a steal of a price. This wine has all the characteristics of the impressive 2012 vintage, concentrated, full-bodied, and complex.

At the upcoming holiday tasting we are releasing an additional new *Field Blend*, *Oregon Special Selection II*, a blend of grapes from the 2011 and 2009 vintages. The wine has our proprietary blend of pinot noir, dolcetto, tempranillo, leMBERger, and chardonnay from the 2011 vintage. To this, we increased the blend by about 20% by blending in 2009 Syrah from the Applegate Valley. This wine is among our favorite *Field Blends*. In comparison to the 2012, which is much more fruit driven, the *Oregon Special Selection II* has style that is more French in character, emphasizing structure over fruit. Both *Field Blends* are delicious, it comes down to a matter of style.

In case you were wondering, the *Oregon Special Selection II* was in sequence to be released before the 2012. However, it wasn't quite ready when we ran out of *Field Blend* last spring. The *Oregon Special Selection II* needed another 6 months of bottle aging. Thus, the 2012 had to pinch hit.

Both Stag Hollow *Field Blend* reds are priced direct-to-customer at \$13/btl (\$11.05/btl in cases lots).

Last Call-Futures for 2015 Estate Tempranillo

For those who missed tasting our 2015 tempranillo futures offering at the Memorial Day holiday events last May, you will have an opportunity at the upcoming tasting in November and December. In the hot 2015 vintage, our tempranillo grapes felt right at home, yielding wines with excellent depth and complexity. Harvested at ~23.8 Brix, the '15 tempranillo shows traditional characteristics of the variety, nicely balanced between fruit and background tannins for aging. An awesome wine. Futures purchase prices are by case and six-bottle lots at \$252/case (\$21/bottle) and \$138/1/2 case (\$23/bottle).

Current Releases

Annual Ho-Ho-Ho Sale

Are you looking for a gratifying weekday pinot noir that over-delivers on quality versus price? Our 2010 *Yamhill Villages* pinot noir is our quality alternative to lower priced pinot noirs found at wine shops and grocery stores. And it gets even better: we just made the 2010 *Villages* customer-direct only from Stag Hollow. This gives us the flexibility to provide a great sale price at \$12.75/btl (retails at \$15) and \$10.80/btl in solo (\$129.60/case) or mixed cases. Stock up for the winter and the holidays on this fantastic deal (Ho-Ho-Ho).

The *Yamhill Villages* pinot noir is a clonal blend, as with most Stag Hollow pinots, with about 60% coming from the *Pommard* block. After bottling in September 2011, we aged the *Yamhill Villages* pinot noir four years before release. This is a structure-driven pinot noir that needed bottle aging. Aging the wine allowed the true character of this wine to develop. We find that the *Yamhill Villages* gains substantial complexity on the second day of being open (i.e., stored in the refrigerator overnight to promote slow oxidation), signaling that the wine has aging potential.

Of note, a companion to the 2010 *Yamhill Villages* pinot noir from 2011 vintage is being sold to restaurants primarily featured as glass pours.

Dolcetto

Last spring, we released our new Stag Hollow 2013 Dolcetto D' Yamhill *Superiore*. *Superiore* meaning the best from the vintage and D' Yamhill signifying a sense of place.

Since its release this dolcetto has aged magnificently over the last six months, and has become one of our favorite dolcettos dating back to our first bottling in 1998. We recently poured the 2013 Dolcetto D' Yamhill *Superiore* at a 200-person tasting event in Portland and it garnered glowing comments from seasoned and savvy dolcetto consumers (e.g., "best dolcetto produced in Oregon or anywhere in the Americas").

The 2013 Dolcetto D' Yamhill *Superiore* is priced at \$22/btl (\$19.80/btl in mixed or solo cases).

Wines in Stock

At our holiday Stag Hollow tastings, we routinely offer a wide selection of wines for tastes, though that selection is only part of what we have in our inventory for sale. There is much more to choose from than what is being tasted.

Our current offerings include special occasion wines like the 2004 *Reserve*, 777/114 *Reserve*, and *Vendange Sélection* pinot noirs at \$80 each, the 2008 *Reserve* pinot noir at \$60.00, and cool vintage *Reserves* from 2010 and 2011 at \$40.00. Our most popular and widely available Stag Hollow pinot noir at retail stores is the 2012 *Yamhill-Carlton*; this wine is also in stock at the tasting room for \$25. There are limited quantities of the 2013 *Field Blend Rose* remaining; even though this wine will not be poured at the upcoming tasting, look for not-to-be-missed close out specials on this wine in the tasting room. Fans of the 2009 777/114 *Reserve* should take notice that we are down to the final 4 cases of this luscious wine; it is on special: \$35.00, \$5.00 off per bottle to close out the vintage. Identical pricing is available for the 2009 *Reserve*.

Forthcoming Wines

In spring 2017, we'll be releasing three new wines: 2015 Muscat, 2014 Dolcetto D' Yamhill, and 2015 Tempranillo. In addition, we'll be pouring barrel samples and selling futures of the 2016 Tempranillo.

Vintage Chart Update

The 2014 pinot noirs have been added to the chart this year. For the most part, there were only a few minor changes made. This past year we have had several wonderful bottles of the 2001s; if you have any it's time to consume while they are still lovely. The 1999 vintage still has excellent staying power and is tasting great, though better to enjoy now. All 2005s continue to be among our favorites. We've served the 2004s at a number of events and they have been crowd pleasers for those who like big-styled pinots. Our recommendations for the holidays overlap with last year: any of our 2004s and 2005s, if you have any; 2008s and 2009s, especially the 777/114 *Reserve*; 2011 *Vendange Sélection*—yes; and if you can't hold back from opening a 2014, pull the cork on a 777/114 *Reserve*.

2016 Vintage Chart--Pinot Noir 1994-2014

<u>Vintage Wine</u>	<u>Drink Range [plateau]</u>
1994 Celebré	now & beyond—still going
1998 Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond (delicious)
1999 Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond (delicious)
2000 Vendange Sélect.	now
2001 Vendange Sélect.	now
2002 Vendange Sélect.	now
2004 Vendange Sélect.	now
2005 Vendange Sélect.	now to 2018
2006 Vendange Sélect.	now to 2017 [2010-15]
2010 Vendange Sélect.	2017 to 2025 [evolving slowly]
2011 Vendange Sélect.	<u>now to 2021</u>
2012 Vendange Sélect.	<u>now to 2022</u>
2014 <u>Vendange Sélect.</u>	<u>2018 to 2025</u>
2000 Reserve	now
2001 Reserve	now
2002 Reserve	now
2004 Reserve	now
2005 Reserve	now
2006 Reserve	now
2008 Reserve	<u>now to 2020</u>
2009 Reserve	<u>now to 2018</u> [14-17]
2010 Reserve	<u>now to 2019</u> [?]
2011 Reserve	<u>now to 2020</u>
2012 Reserve	<u>2017 to 2022</u>
2014 Reserve	<u>2018 to 2025</u>
2004 Reserve-777/114	now
2005 Reserve-777/114	now
2008 Reserve 777/114	now to <u>2017</u>
2009 Reserve 777/114	now to <u>2019</u>
2014 Reserve 777/114	2017 to 2022
2006 Yamhill-Carlton	now
2008 Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2018 [2011-16]
2009 Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2017 [2014-16]
2011 Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2017 [2014-16]
2012 Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2020 [2015-17]

[Underlining signifies change since the previous Vintage Chart. Now refers to drinking well now. **Plateau refers to the most satisfying time period (in our opinion) to consume the wine.** Production of "Reserve" designation began in 2000. Wines that should have been consumed by now are not listed]

Cheers, Jill and Mark (and Brix)