



MARIMAR ESTATE
VINEYARDS & WINERY

Harvest 2015: A Record-Setting Year, and Excellent Quality!

Sebastopol, CA – 2015 was a record breaker in many ways, all due to the erratic weather – we had the earliest harvest in the history of the winery, the coolest May on record during flowering and fruit set, and the driest and hottest August and September, crucial months for the harvest of our grapes.

Early Bird Harvest

The first day of harvest came August 19 – the earliest start date we've had since our very first harvest in 1989! After living through 27 harvests here in Russian River/Green Valley, we are observing vintages that are more irregular -- possibly owing to climate change.

We began by bringing in Pinot Noir from the upper Don Miguel Vineyard, and harvest progressed rapidly from there. Yields were lower than expected, and way below our 5-year average – only 1.75 pounds/vine! We started picking Chardonnay on August 22 and were pleased to see that yields were better than with Pinot Noir, yet less than “normal” (if there is such a thing): 4 pounds/vine on average.

In the Doña Margarita Vineyard, four miles closer to the Pacific and much cooler, we started harvesting on Sept. 14. Due to its coastal location, we have to monitor it very closely – the berries are smaller and must be picked quickly after they are ripe to avoid high sugars and fruit dehydration. Even with the low yields, we were excited about the flavors and acid balance in the grapes at harvest time.

An Unusual Growing Season

Overall it was a mild, dry winter, continuing the California drought. Bud break came quickly in early February followed by fine weather in March and April. May was unusually cool, causing flowering to slow and leaving us with what we call “hens and chicks” or *millerandage* – clusters with normal-size berries among smaller ones, often with no seeds or a single one. Some vines had flowers and berries at the same time because of the extended bloom period, which is very unusual. The abnormally cool weather also brought *coulure* or shatter, when flowers never become berries due to the poor set in.

Then, the heat was on! We were struck by three separate heat waves: in late July, in mid-August, when a 103-degree weekend left us sweltering, and a final blast in early September.

The Best Part of the Day – Breakfast!

Our tireless vineyard team of nine people began picking at 4 a.m. every day non-stop, and I provided a welcome break at sunrise with a healthy breakfast of freshly made coffee, juice, fruit, nuts – and oh well, pastries too. Breakfast with the team at harvest is always the highlight of my day!

A+ Albariño, Terrific Tempranillo, and Superb Syrah!

Both indigenous grapes from my native Spain, Albariño and Tempranillo, are looking especially good. We have different trellis systems for these varieties that are working beautifully: for the Albariño, a divided canopy with alternating spurs along a single cordon, which widens the canopy and protects the clusters from sunburn. The Tempranillo is head trained and spur pruned – the planting system recommended for this variety by the best producers I have visited in Rioja and Ribera del Duero.

As always, Syrah was the last picked on September 30 – and with that ended a fast and furious harvest from which we expect high costs but excellent quality!

Marimar Torres
Winegrower / Proprietor

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2015 HARVEST



OUR MASTER TASTER, BONITA, DECIDED THE GRAPES WERE RIPE SO WE STARTED HARVEST!



A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SHATTER, OR *COULURE*, VERY COMMON THIS SEASON: TINY CLUSTERS, SMALL BERRIES



ALBARIÑO LOOKED REALLY GOOD – AND TASTED GREAT, TOO! SMALLER YIELDS BUT HIGH QUALITY



OUR INTERN FROM SPAIN, LLORENÇ, WAS HAPPY WITH THE LOOKS OF THE DESTEMMED PINOT NOIR GRAPES



CARMELO, AKA “ABUELO” (GRANDPA) AMONG THE TEMPRANILLO VINES THE DAY WE HARVESTED IT



HARVEST WENT ON EVEN ON SUNDAYS! BUT ALWAYS NICE TO BREAK FOR COFFEE AND A FEW LAUGHS AT 6 AM