

Harvesting the Syrah, September 2009.



KEVIN'S MESSAGE

THE BROTHERHOOD OF WINEMAKERS

It's been a long, challenging, and exciting road since moving to Paso Robles. It's hard to believe that five years has actually gone by. Is it a case of time flying when you're having fun, or accelerating when you get old? I'm hoping it's the former, as the getting old theory doesn't bode well for my naive ideas of being able to kick back at some point to enjoy the fruits of our labor.

Taking inventory this year: we've hired several new distributors; we've travelled more to promote the wines; we moved our entire winemaking process and purchased lots of new equipment; we've completed the design of our winery and gone through the county bureaucracy to get final approval; we've just finished harvesting about 16 tons of fruit from our own vineyard, and have processed somewhere around 30 tons in total. Even more ambitious, by Christmas, we will have removed another couple of acres of walnut trees, and our one plus acre of cab, cleaned it, staked it, and prepped it for a new 2 1/2 acre dry farmed cab block. And last but not least, the winery will have been excavated with our foundation, slab, and retaining walls completed. Not bad for a "one-man" operation. But I haven't done it all myself.

Adolfo Holguin, my trusty farming sidekick, has joined us as a full-time employee, and we get help from others as well. Since the beginning of this winemaking enterprise some 17 years ago,

I have been amazed by the willingness of people in this industry to help an enthusiastic newcomer. Maybe it's because I come from a business that is about as far as you can get on the other end of the "brotherhood scale". Very few in the investment business would ever consider helping an outsider gain a foothold, much less share their hard earned wisdom on a variety of subjects. But from our first meeting with the Perrin's of Beaucastel 14 years ago, to the myriad of local growers and winemakers I talk to daily here in Paso, virtually every person in the wine business that I've asked for help (and there have been many), has been generous with their time and knowledge.

One of the people who went beyond expectations was Scott Rich of Moraga Vineyards in BelAir, who answered questions and hooked me up with contacts throughout California back when we were starting out in Topanga. One of those contacts was Helen Keplinger (keplingerwines.com) who consulted with us on our Jussila wines.

Four years ago, Helen introduced me to Natasha Boffman, the winemaker for Taz, and her husband, John Guffy, who heads up operations for Courtside Cellars in San Miguel. For those of you that don't know Courtside, it's a HUGE facility that processes tens of thousands of tons of fruit every year. Anyway, Tasha has been helping me since our introduction with the finer points of the science behind winemaking. John, because of his

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2009 Harvest Notes

Like 2008, the 2009 growing season started out suddenly around the end of March. Yet another sub-par rain year (four in a row), the rain total amounted to little over 16 inches. Spring and summer were very cool. With the exception of a few days in May, and again in the second week of July, growing conditions were ideal. We harvested our first grapes the first of September, leading off with Viognier and Grenache Blanc. The heat came on the first few days of September, and the grapes all started screaming to be picked. Of our 30 tons total that will be processed this year, we had taken a bit over 20 by the last week of September. Since we dry farm our vineyard, an earlier harvest is expected, but even for us, the harvest was about two weeks early.

For the most part, we're feeling that this will be a very nice vintage, especially for the fruit we pulled off of our own vines. The Syrah and Grenache came in fully ripe with nice acidity. Yields were around 1.25-1.5 tons to the acre. The clusters were clean and evenly colored. The Grenache, in particular, was very even; this isn't always the case, especially in the fourth leaf. Our Zin yields were just under 1 ton per acre, and also came in fully ripe with little color variation and raisining. As for our cab, we'll harvest a bit over one ton, and will then pull the block, add some acreage, and replant as a dry farmed, head pruned block this Spring. Until it starts to produce, we'll contract with our

neighbors, Halter Ranch, to fulfill our needs. We got small yields from our Counoise (1.25 tons) but in line with our blending needs. It will be a fun grape to integrate into our blends. Although it's light in color, the fruit is beautiful and should prove to be a wonderful compliment to our traditional Rhone blends. We decided not to harvest our Mourvedre even though our plants did much better this year. Mourvedre is notoriously difficult, and although our fruit looked good through August, the plants started to struggle. So we decided to drop all of the fruit and wait till next year to harvest our first crop. Given the improvements over last year, we're pretty confident that things will work out just fine.



Early morning in the vineyard

kukkula Grabs Parker's Attention

We've been holding our breath for the last few months because in conjunction with the Hospice du Rhone in May, kukkula submitted several wines to Robert Parker for review in his influential newsletter, "The Wine Advocate". The results came out in the August 31 issue and we have breathed a sigh of relief (and danced a little jig) because he liked them! In his words, "All of these fairly priced wines merit attention."

2006 in the red	87
2007 in the red	89+
2007 Lothario	90
2006 sisu	90
2007 sisu	89

The following are his comments on the wines we've listed above (Note: Other than rating the **2006 In the Red**, he didn't make any specific comments.):

The most tannic offering is the **2007 In the Red**, a blend of equal parts Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. A deep ruby/purple color is accompanied by notes of cassis, underbrush, tobacco leaf, and cedar. While full-bodied, dense, and seriously endowed, it

requires several years of bottle age, and should keep for 6-10 years thereafter.

The **2007 Lothario** (35% Mourvedre, 34% Zinfandel, and 31% Grenache) offers copious aromas of flowers as well as blue and black fruits, a full-bodied texture, impressive purity, and a long, heady finish displaying a Burgundian-like hint of forest floor. It should drink nicely for 5-7 years.

The wine that reveals the most improvement is the **2006 Sisu**, a beautiful blend of 51% Syrah, 25% Grenache, and 24% Mourvedre. Abundant amounts of blue and red fruits interwoven with hints of forest floor and spring flowers are found in this cuvee, which has put on weight, fleshed out, and exhibits a full-bodied, pure, impressive, complex style. It is a good version of a French Cotes du Rhone from Paso Robles.

The soft, seductive **2007 Sisu** is composed of 55% Syrah, 25% Grenache, and 20% Mourvedre. It possesses plenty of mountain berry fruit intermixed with notions of licorice, forest floor, damp earth, and spice box. Medium to full-bodied, sexy, and luscious, it can be drunk now or cellared for 3-4 years.

All of these fairly priced wines merit attention, and given how the 2006s showed dramatic improvement, I wouldn't be surprised to see the 2007s (overall a better vintage) do the same.

The kukkula Wine Club continues to be a great way to try kukkula wines and save money on future purchases. You sign up to automatically receive two half-case shipments per year (we choose the wines). The wines in the shipment are discounted by 20% **and** any other purchases receive the 20% discount, plus an additional 15% if you buy a case or more at a time. Club members also have priority on purchasing limited release wines (like Lothario and lagnippe) and will receive invitations to members-only events.

Our next shipment will be sent out the week of November 9th 2009 (weather permitting -- we won't ship if it is too hot). If you will be out our way, you can save on shipping by picking up your wine. Please call us or email us at kevin@kukulawine.com if you would like to pick-up. Also, if you want to add to your kukkula Wine Club shipment and it totals a case or more of wine (including the half-case shipment), you will receive an

additional 15% discount on the entire order. The November shipment is the perfect time to stock up on wines for the holidays!

Don't forget that kukkula Wine Club memberships make great gifts. Membership and order forms are included in the Newsletter, or go online to kukulawine.com to join. Currently we can ship to AZ,CA,CO, D.C.,FL,IA,IL,LA,MN,NM,NV and TX. In theory, we can also ship to HI, but shipping costs are astronomical and aren't included on the website. If you live in Hawaii and are seriously interested, contact us, as we may be able to ship through our distributor.

We also host private tastings for Wine Club members and other interested groups in our home. We're enjoying sharing our wines and getting to know the Wine Club members better. Until we have a tasting room, you can arrange a tasting by calling (805) 227-0111, and come up to enjoy the view from the top of



PAULA'S KUKKULA-TI

kukkula = Great Gifts

The jury is still out on whether or not we will be harvesting olives this Fall. the harvest looks to be more than last year, but perhaps not enough to warrant the cost of picking and milling. I will be making more wine jelly and will also produce some tins of spice rub for steak. If you were at our lunch in May you probably tasted the rub on the flank steak. It is a very easy to prepare meal and pairs well with all of our reds. We will be sending sample tins out with the Fall shipment, so you Wine Club members can try it at home. We will have these products available for purchase along with the wine on our website or directly through us.

We encourage you to use us as a resource for holiday gifts and will extend our maximum discount (35%) to anyone purchasing a total of three cases or more of wine. We can also work with you to put together special packaging and do your shipping. Last year we shipped out 20 gift-wrapped cases of wine, thanks to Roger Howard and Sherry Sterling. Since they are continuing to order thank you cases from us, we assume everyone was happy with the results! Give me (Paula) a call to discuss options. We need plenty of time to order any special packaging and prepare shipments.

BROTHERHOOD (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

operations expertise, has been an invaluable resource for equipment and service questions. Most recently, he's helped me decide on the layout of our new facility. Both Tasha and John have busy careers, and are raising a family, yet they're always generous with their time.

This year, I've gotten to know Stephan Asseo, from L'Aventure. Stephan is arguably one of the most prominent winemakers and growers on the Central Coast, (heck.. the planet). I've admired his wines for years. kukkula has often been placed alphabetically next to L'Aventure at various wine festivals and events where we joke about being the "ugly step sister" when we are lost in the crowds trying to get a taste of Stephan's wines. In these meetings, visits to L'Aventure, and even a recent walk-through visit to our property, I've been picking his brain, especially with respect to his farming practices. He's been extremely generous with his time and creative ideas on what I should be doing to get the most out of my vines and, ultimately, my wine. You'll be able to taste the results of one of the experiments he suggested when we bottle some of the 2009s that we fermented in puncheons (giant wooden barrels).

I can't think of any business, where so many people (effectively competitors) are so willing to help each other. Upon reflection, though, I think it's fair to say that the people in this business are really passionate about the whole farming/winemaking process. A lot of us either have, or have come from, other careers where we long desired to release ourselves from corporate shackles and pursue a venture where there are no rules. There's something very infectious about this lifestyle, so we can't help ourselves. Besides, if we all share our successes, it only serves to raise all of our boats. To the brotherhood of winemakers!



DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

The last year has been a crazy one for us in terms of distribution. Our Hawaii distributor went out of business (without paying us) and we replaced them with Johnson Brothers of Hawaii, who are doing a spectacular job. Partly because we were so impressed with their success, we have recently replaced our California distributor and are now represented by Epic Wines in California. They will be selling our wines throughout the state, so you'll soon be able to find our products at wine shops and restaurants in Northern California too.

We also recently added distributors in Texas and Illinois. We are excited to gain some more exposure in both of those states and to work with some great reps. Encore Beverage in Nevada continues to represent us in the Tahoe-Reno area, and in Louisiana we are represented by Paul Bologna Fine Wines. For our current level of production, we are where we need to be distribution-wise. The next big marketing push will be opening a tasting room and selling more product direct.

Feel free to recommend us to any local wine shops and restaurants. If you drop us a line and let us know that you have given a recommendation, we'll follow up with our distributors and ask them to call on the account.



kukula

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