



2023

Fall Newsletter



*“Thank you very much, Mr. Roboto
For doing the jobs that nobody wants to
And thank you very much, Mr. Roboto
For helping me escape, when I needed to
Thank you, thank you, thank you
I want to thank you*

*Please, thank you, oh-oh-oh, yeah
The problem's plain to see
Too much technology
Machines to save our lives
Machines dehumanize.”
—Mr. Roboto (Styx)*



MATTHEW RUSSELL ASSOCIATE WINEMAKER
TASTING WITH PAUL GREGUTT WINE WRITER.

A WORD FROM THE WINEMAKER

There have been many articles written over the past few months about the invention, development, implementation, and possible serious real-world impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI). I just read one the other day in Vanity Fair entitled, “Artificial Intelligence May Be Humanity’s Most Ingenious Invention—And It’s Last?” that delves into the potential real-world issues created by AI taking away jobs, even entire industries, simply because it is faster. It has essentially a near infinite capacity to absorb information available to it and, of course, is cheaper than human labor. There seems to be a consensus that jobs that are research oriented, paralegals, copy editors, etc. are going to run into a wall of AI that will be impossible to climb over. There is less certainty about the arts. AI can, and does, generate stories and images that can be done in the style famous painters, novelists, poets, etc.

I am writing this on September 26, 2023 and we are at the tail end of the harvest. Around 90% of our fruit is in the door, some for as long as two weeks now. Every day when I get here between 4 and 5 A.M., I get to spend time with the wines and do my best to get to know what we have on hand. For me that involves constantly plunging my hands up to my elbows in the must (the grapes in the fermenter) to get a sense of temperature, density, aromatics and such. Other than a baseline of the grape’s bio-chemical make-up taken a couple of days after being picked we rarely, if ever, take any measurements on the juice or wine. Sometime in the early morning people will start filtering in and the day’s activities begin, receiving and processing fruit, managing fermenters (pigeage and pump overs), pressing grapes, putting wine into barrels and so much cleaning. As per usual, we have an excellent winery crew and harvest workers, so the winery buzzes with individuals’ collective activities that push us through the day and toward the end of harvest when we have all the wines finished in barrel (or whatever vessel they are supposed to be in).

It’s this incredible human endeavor that makes the wines here and most places in the Willamette Valley. A season of growing, accomplished by human hands that worked on each individual vine multiple times across several different activities. These hands raised fruit that was capable of being turned into wines that aren’t just red or white fluid with alcohol in them, but unique wines with depth, richness, unique personalities,



JIM ANDERSON AT HIS LAB BENCH DURING HARVEST

flavors, and aromas that not only are delicious and age worthy, but capable of transmitting the sense of this place here in Oregon.

I am quite certain that machines can do the farming that produces ripe grapes and are capable of sorting fruit (optical scanners are used all over the world), loading them into fermenters and managing entire fermentations with nothing more than some programming (I’ve seen these tanks). So, from a technical perspective we’re not irreplaceable. I am sure with further AI development the “winemaking” aspect of things could become much more sophisticated.

As I stated earlier, winemaking at this level isn’t about numbers. You need them, but once there is a base set everything else is about nuance, experience, gut instinct and, yes, a human feel for what’s right. I don’t think AI is coming for our sector of the wine industry. Not in any real sort of way. Perhaps we are the proverbial John Henry, the Steel Driving Man, capable of out-working the latest technology, but only at the expense of our own existence, but I don’t think so. Wine isn’t about the ability to grind numbers and information. As much as it is *possible* to do it that way, the results we produce are going to be fuller, richer, deeper, more fulfilling and, ultimately, more human.

Skynet, or whatever comes of all this, will have to continually cede this ground to us. Humans may be all sorts of flawed but we can work as a wide spread and even far-flung team, spread across nationalities and generations, to create wines that have a life to them that is meaningful. I don’t believe we are living in *The Matrix* but I do think it’s more than likely if we *were* that the machines wouldn’t know what chicken should taste like so they would make everything taste like chicken. And for that, at least, I am happy.

We produced 36 individual Pinot Noirs in 2021 and 32 are waiting for you, most of the old favorites and some new and extremely interesting and exciting wines. Revel in the humanity that it took to grow them, harvest them, make them, raise them, bottle them, and even sell them. We’re a winery, but we are also a people place. That may be more important than ever sooner than later.

— Jim Anderson



MID-HARVEST REPORT 2023

You don't get many of these! We are about 280-tons into what should be about a 325-ton vintage. However, we are in a little lull where fermentations are only just beginning to get ready to be pressed and we are waiting out a spot of rain to pick the last of the fruit. It has been quite a vintage. If you are here in Oregon, you know how DRY this summer was. Crazy. I would say this vintage reminds me a lot of vintages like 2000, 2002, 2006 (if you have followed us closely for 17 vintages AND follow us on Instagram you would have an idea of what I mean), 2015 and 2017. I think we are going to have opulent wines that have a wealth of fruit, dry extract, structure, and a lot more staying power than

people will initially give them credit for. However, just this morning something struck me about this vintage in relation to another that doesn't make any meteorological sense, but nonetheless is there. We have a lot of fermenters in highly active states in the winery right now. As I said earlier, I usually get here by 5 a.m. each morning and when I walked in and got the doors open to let out the CO₂ that had built up during the night the winery smelled like a bakery in the middle of baking berry muffins. Beautiful. The only time I remember that exact sensation was in 1996. A late, cold, rainy, and impossibly wonderful vintage in Oregon. So, who knows?



ESTATE VINEYARD BONSHAW BLOCK GOING THROUGH FERMENTATION

SOME 2021 WINES TO CONSIDER

We will be continuing with the 2021 vintage through the end of the year and will look to release the 2022s next Spring. It has been just over a year since the 2021 Pinot Noirs went into bottle. It feels a lot longer than that, somehow! While these are still young wines we have seen enough evolution of them from their early, bottle shocked days to now to have a really good understanding of the vintage. While we always viewed this vintage as an excellent one with both terrific consistency (when you knock out 36 Pinot Noirs there better be some high, high level consistency!) and great intensity of flavor, acidity and structure. The main question was how were all the individual barrels going to come together and how would the wines show once they began to pull themselves toward a whole. What we are seeing and, to be sure, what wine critics are writing is that

this is an extraordinary set of wines from what will have to be considered one of the top tier vintages of the 21st century. For me this would fit in with the 2016 and 2012 vintages which are both the top of the pyramid for me. What 2021 would have as an advantage over those vintages would be breadth of wines made, sheer volume of wine made and the continued addition of wines at the very apex of excellence in our portfolio (e.g. Freedom Hill Perspicacious, Shafer Vineyard, Estate Coury Clone, etc.). This will be a hard vintage to top although we always give it our best shot. We are going to be segueing into the 2022 wines soon and in some cases, we've already sold out of the 2021. Still, there are some wines you may have missed or want to revisit (re-stock!) before they are gone. Always a good plan.

NEW 2021 VINTAGE SCORES

Jeb Dunnuck • September 2023 Scores <https://jebdunnuck.com/>

- 2022 Helen Dusschee Tempranillo Rose ~ 91 Points
- 2021 Hyland Vineyard, Coury Clone Pinot Noir ~ 95 Points
- 2021 Corrine Vineyard, Wadensvil Block Pinot Noir ~ 95 Points
- 2021 Balcombe Vineyard Pinot Noir ~ 93 Points
- 2021 Chehalem Mountain Vineyard, Wadensvil Block Pinot Noir ~ 94 Points
- 2021 Corrine Vineyard, Anklebreaker Block Pinot Noir ~ 96 Points
- 2021 Durant Vineyard, Bishop Block Pinot Noir ~ 93 Points
- 2021 Estate Vineyard, Bonshaw Block Pinot Noir ~ 96 Points — **SOLD OUT**
- 2021 Estate Vineyard, Coury Clone Pinot Noir ~ 97 Points
- 2021 Estate Vineyard, Etzel Block Pinot Noir ~ 95 Points — **SOLD OUT**
- 2021 Estate Vineyard, Old Vine Pinot Noir ~ 94 Points
- 2021 Estate Vineyard, Wadensvil Block Pinot Noir ~ 94 Points
- 2021 Freedom Hill Vineyard, Pommard Clone Pinot Noir ~ 95 Points
- 2021 Freedom Hill Vineyard, Dijon 115 Clone Pinot Noir ~ 94 Points
- 2021 Freedom Hill Vineyard, Wadensvil Clone Pinot Noir ~ 96 Points
- 2021 Freedom Hill Vineyard, Coury Clone Pinot Noir ~ 96 Points
- 2021 Freedom Hill Vineyard, Perspicacious Cuvée Pinot Noir ~ 98 Points
- 2021 Medici Vineyard Pinot Noir ~ 95 Points
- 2021 Mysterious/Arcus Vineyard Pinot Noir ~ 97 Points
- 2021 Notorious Pinot Noir ~ 96 Points
- 2021 Ridgecrest Vineyard Pinot Noir ~ 97 Points
- 2021 Weber Vineyard Pinot Noir ~ 95 Points
- 2021 Wind Ridge Vineyard Pinot Noir ~ 98 Points



AT THE WINERY

We are hosting an Open House down in the winery on November 18th and 19th from 10am - 2pm!

RESERVATIONS ARE NOT REQUIRED. We will be tasting some of our most sought-after wines from the 2021 vintage like Medici Vineyard and Ridgecrest Vineyard. We will also be releasing the 25th Anniversary bottling from the Balcombe Vineyard, with vineyard owner and member of our little found-family Joyce Cooke in attendance to meet and greet on Saturday, November 18th! This tasting is complimentary for club members (up to 4 people) and futures purchasers, and \$25/person for non-members.



JOYCE BAKER COOKE

**BALCOMBE VINEYARD
25TH ANNIVERSARY**

PINOT NOIR DUNDEE HILLS

We will be closed Wednesday, November 22nd and Thursday, November 23rd for Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Weekend Open by appointment from 10a.m. to 3p.m.