



The Hurricane of Grape Harvest

By Sierra Wright



Above: Lee Wright tends to the vines with birdnet to keep birds away from ripe berries before harvest.

Upcoming Events:

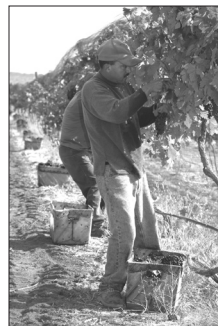
3rd Friday Wine Tasting
Westwind Gallery in
The Dalles
Nov. 18th, 5-7pm

Thanksgiving Wine Tasting
Hood River Hotel
Nov. 25-26th, 1-6pm

1st Friday Wine Tasting
Hood River City Market
Dec. 1st, 6:00pm



Every time I visit a winery in the fall I hear all of the statistics for this year's harvest: What level of brix were the grapes harvested at this year? Was there any bunch rot? Did you encounter any fights with Mother Nature? While I admit, these are all very important questions that determine the quality of grapes (I'll leave these questions for my dad)...but what I really want to know is what went on behind the scenes. So in this newsletter, I offer



you a glimpse into The Wright Family during harvest.

Any farmer understands the utter chaos that exists during picking season, but how

about the "normal" people? Imagine sampling grapes from Underwood, Wash. to Arlington, Ore. in an attempt to determine the perfect time to start picking. Imagine moving one crew (and equipment) between 17 vineyards boasting over 200 acres of grapes to harvest. Imagine trudging up steep, dusty hills, picking one cluster at a time. Imagine working with grape juice running down your arms and bees

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A View from the Vineyard

By Lonnie Wright

How was the harvest? Exciting! I'm looking forward to the '05 wines in the bottle! This harvest took some patience. We had significant rainfall Sept. 30 and had to wait for the grape plants to metabolize the extra water out of the grapes. It's tough to wait, however grapes and wine do reward patience.



So what do we

look for in the vineyard when determining when to pick? For red grapes we want fully ripe fruit with big wine characteristics. How does this happen? Part of big red wine is alcohol content. Generally our wines are 14% and above. This would be considered high for a pinot noir, but for merlot, syrah and zinfandel this shows that the grapes were at least 24.5 brix when harvested.

Another thing we look for is ripe tannins. All grapes have tannins. These can either be overwhelming

Harvest Facts:
Old Vine Zin and 18-year Zin
 Harvested at: 25-26 brix

Merlot
 Harvested at: 25 brix

Brix: A means of measuring the sugar in the grapes. It has french origin translating as percent sugar (e.g. 25 brix=25% sugar).

and impart green (unripe) flavors to the wine, or they can add complexity to the wine as ripe tannins. A big indication of ripe tannins is brown seeds. Since the seeds

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Mama's in the Kitchen Cookin' Bruschetta

Shopping list:

- Sourdough baguette (or your favorite) sliced 1-1.5 in. thick
- 1 tsp. Salt and black pepper
- 1 tsp. basil
- 1 tbsp. honey olive oil
- 4 cloves of garlic minced
- 1 med. onion finely chopped
- 1 red or yellow bell pepper chopped
- 10-15 crimini mushrooms sliced
- 8-10 kalamata olives sliced
- 1/4 cup The Pines zinfandel (if you need more wine...add more!)
- marinera sauce
- asiago, feta, or parmesan cheese (your choice)

Recipe by Linda Wright

Let's get started:

- 1) Pour yourself a glass of The Pines zinfandel...if you cook with wine, you should be drinking wine!
- 2) Sweat onion and garlic in two tablespoons olive oil over med-high heat. Add all remaining ingredients (except marinera, olives, cheese and bread) and saute (about 5 minutes).
- 3) Meanwhile, lightly brush olive oil on one side of bread. Place on a cookie sheet and broil until light brown. Remove from oven.
- 4) Heat marinera sauce then spoon desired amount on oiled side of bread. Add sauteed mixture and olives atop the bread. Sprinkle with cheese.
- 5) Place the bruschetta in the broiler until cheese is melted and mixture is hot (about two minutes--watch carefully). Remove from oven and enjoy!

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swarming around the sweet berries trying to sample the produce. Imagine fielding telephone calls from wineries around the country wanting grapes that you don't have, but you stay up late trying to find grapes anyways. Now imagine doing this for two months. This is what harvest is for my dad, Lonnie Wright.

This year's harvest has been extra special as it is the first time in years that the entire family has been involved. Lee, my older brother, decided to lend a hand this year. He began by taking over the tedious task of bird-netting the vineyards, setting a harvest record for the fast-

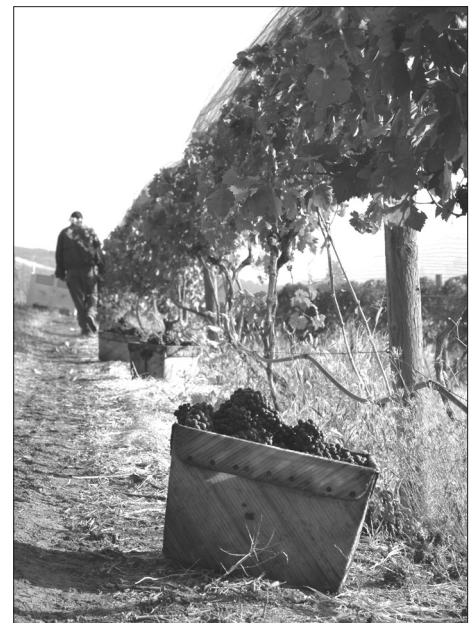


Sierra Wright (right) and friend sample grapes before harvest.

est and most efficient tractor operation. Next, he moved to dealing with mom and my party planning of the 2004 Old Vine Zin release party (which was a lot of fun—thanks to those of you who attended). After the party, harvest really picked up. Lee accompanied my dad in the vineyards for grape sampling to determine the optimal time to pick; a tedious job but somebody must do it. Throughout the remaining harvest Lee helped run the juice plant. A true renaissance man. It was nice to see him work with my dad again.

So what was I doing throughout the chaos? I planned parties and wine tastings, attended wine festivals, serviced vendor accounts, and tried not to be buried alive by paperwork.

Meanwhile, my mom was the support of the household. She was a godsend during harvest! She helped me pour at events and helped plan the Old Vine Zin release party. She managed to keep my dad and brother well-fed when they returned from



Lonnie Wright walks the vineyard one crisp harvest morning

a grueling day in the vineyards. She even offered to work on our muscle aches, although I'm still trying to redeem my promised back rub.

In the end, we all survived another chaotic two months of harvest. But this time, I think we all got a little closer and a lot more involved in the business.

The Pines Copper Club

We recently shipped our second Copper Club wine. I hope all of you are enjoying the vino! Being a Pines Copper Club member has benefits not available to the general public. These benefits include, but are not limited to the following:

- *No Joining Fee*
- *4 bottles of wine shipped 3 times per year*
- *Discounted rates for special events*
- *Member-only parties*
- *20% off all wine purchases*
- *Complimentary wine tasting at The Pines*



Shipment Dates (during the weeks of):

Sept. 10th

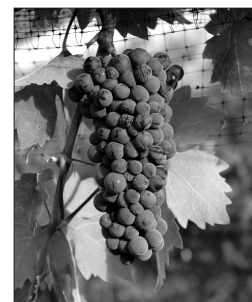
Jan. 10th

April 10th

Estimated Wine Cost per year: \$300

The April 10th wine shipment will Include:

Unknown at this time



----- Please cut along the line and send us your information in order to join The Pines Copper Club -----

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Billing Information:

Credit Card Number _____

Credit Card Type: Visa Mastercard

Expiration Date _____

Check box if you will pick up shipment (saves shipping costs)

• *Your credit card will be automatically billed during the week of the shipment date.*



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stay in red wine during fermentation the ripeness of seeds is crucial. Even if the sugar level in the grape is perfect and the fruit tastes great, you may still need to wait for those darn seeds to catch up with the other aspects of the fruit.

We also look at titratable acid levels and ph levels. I’m not going to get into this too much except to say that these levels also indicate balance within the grape. Let’s move on to the secret to great wine! Great wine



comes from good fruit characteristics

to balance the alcohol levels. The key to knowing a great grape is to taste the grapes. When they start tasting like jam they are very close to harvest. Sometimes it’s grape jam, sometimes blueberry, raspberry or blackberry.

Take all of these ingredients of harvest and throw in enough rain to upset all these balances, or worse to start bunch rot in the grapes, and you can understand why a grape grower’s eyes start getting a little wider in late October. When you know a vineyard block is just two or three days away from being perfect and the weatherman tells you that rain in the Willamette Valley has a 50% chance of getting over to this side of



(Above) Lonnie Wright examines old vine zinfandel grape clusters at harvest.

the mountains do you pick? You can pick at almost perfect or wait just two days longer to make a killer vintage where everything is balanced just right. This year we waited until the very end. We finished harvest on Nov. 1 and it rained for the next five days straight.

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