

6/17/2010

Volume 1, Issue 1

The Lightning Bolt

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Thank you!

Thanks to all of you who have visited us since we opened last October. It was a long 8-year slog for us to get to that point. It still seems surreal sometimes! After 7 months of tasting room operation, it has been so much fun to meet folks from all over the country, and all over the world...as well as our neighbors in Sonoita. It has also been great to see our repeat customers, since that

gives us some confidence that we must be doing something right! The response to our wines has been wonderful. We certainly plan to keep striving for excellence in the vineyard and in the winery. Our Lightning Bolt newsletter will be sent out several times a year. It will keep you updated on what's going on at the winery, upcoming events, and whatever else we think might interest "wine

people". Thanks once again to all of you who have stopped by. We look forward to seeing you on your next trip to our area.



They're growing!

Harvest Help List Forming

We have had lots of inquiries regarding helping out with picking grapes during harvest season. If you are interested in volunteering, **please send us an email with your name, contact information, and whether you would be available on weekends only, or also during the week.** Generally, when we have our volunteer crews helping, we try to start around 7-7:30 AM, and finish around 11-12. Generally, we follow this with some sort of little

party, with some food and wine. However, this will be our first harvest season where we also have a tasting room to run, so we may be tinkering with the format just a bit this year. We'll have this all figured out before the beginning of harvest in mid-August. Basically, no skill is required. We will provide all the training you need. No heavy lifting is required, beyond being able to carry a 5-gallon bucket of grapes between vines. There are a number of other support tasks that

do not require picking also. More detail will be provided for those with an interest in participating. The one drawback with harvest is that we cannot give much advance notice. It is usually 2-4 days.

It is actually a lot of fun, and a great family activity.

Meet the Grape

Montepulciano:

[*Mawn teh pool CHEE ah noh*] Not to be confused with the scenic medieval Tuscan hilltown of the same name, nor the *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*, which is made predominantly with Sangiovese, the Montepulciano grape is largely grown in east central regions of Italy, and is most renowned in

the mountainous Abruzzo region on the Adriatic coast. The grape thrives in the heat, and is the last grape that we harvest. It makes a beautiful deep-colored, full-bodied wine, with smooth tannins, and spicy flavors of plum and tobacco. The wines pair well with hearty Italian cuisine and sharp cheeses. The grape is quite rare in the US, perhaps due to its long

growing season. We are very excited to have this varietal in our vineyard, and look forward to introducing these wines to our friends and customers. So come on in and give it a taste.



Events

We had our first annual barrel tasting on March 20. Ann led 24 guests through a tasting of 7 wines from the 2008 and 2009 harvest. The wines were paired with Italian hors d'oeuvres prepared by Prairie Chicks Catering.

the same wine from different harvest years.

We can't wait for next year's tasting!

details.

2nd Annual Wine, Dine, and Unwind: June 18-20

(mountainempirewineanddine.com).....we still don't know much about this, other than that we are participating!! Please visit the website above for

New Release Dinner at Viaggio Italiano in Sonoita, **late July**. (We'll send a notice when the date is firmed up).

Barrel tasting provides a fascinating snapshot of wines at various stages of their development, particularly when tasting

The drag racing winemaker

Everything about growing grapes and making wine requires patience, and meticulous attention to detail. You get once chance a year to grow the grapes, choose the correct time to harvest, and to make all the correct decisions during the

winemaking process. Then you wait...and wait...to see if all the decisions made throughout the year were correct. Contrast that to drag racing. Seven seconds of exhilaration doing the quarter-mile. Ann got to ride shotgun in

a 2-seat dragster at the Southwestern International Speedway recently. She now knows what it feels like to go from 0 to 177 mph in 7.3 seconds. Instant gratification for a change!



Recent Awards

We are proud to announce that our 2007 Zinfandel recently was awarded a Silver Medal in the National Women Winemaker's Competition, held in Santa Rosa, CA. We have been enjoying this wine for the last year, as it has evolved from somewhat of a "fruit bomb" when bottled in April of 2009, to a more complex mix of fruit, pepper, and smoke at the present time. So, we certainly agree with the panel judges on this one! The good news is that we've got about 40 cases of this wine still in stock.



An unusual sight in late April...but didn't harm the vines. We were not so lucky the next week.



Frost Update:

On April 30, a nasty frost hit the vineyards of Sonoita, with the temperatures dropping to 26°. We generally figure if we can make it to May, we're safe. We almost made it this year! About 60-70% of the Elgin Rd. vineyard got hit hard. The Cabernet and Zinfandel had only minor damage, but there was complete devastation in the Sangiovese, Petite Verdot, Nebbiolo, and Cabernet Franc. The vines are recovering nicely, but the yield on the

affected vines will be quite low this year. The good news is that the vineyard outside the winery and tasting room escaped largely unscathed. The temperatures only dipped to 33° here. Amazing what a difference only a few miles makes.

The irony is that one week before the killer frost, we had 3 inches of snow on the vines. The snow actually insulates the green growth, so we had no damage from that

storm. We thought we had survived the spring frost threat, only to be foiled the following week.

If only the frost was as efficient at killing the weeds as it is at killing the green growth on the vines!!

Upcoming Releases

We will be bottling our 2008 Estate Sangiovese and our 2008 Resonance (an estate blend of Syrah, Mourvedre, and Counoise), in late June, and releasing the wines in late summer. They will have both had about 20 months of barrel age, and a couple months of bottle age upon release. We are

excited to have two new estate wines to add to the tasting list. Our 2007 estate wines, of which we only had 1 barrel in most cases, simply flew out of the tasting room.

We think both of these wines are excellent, and will be very well-received.

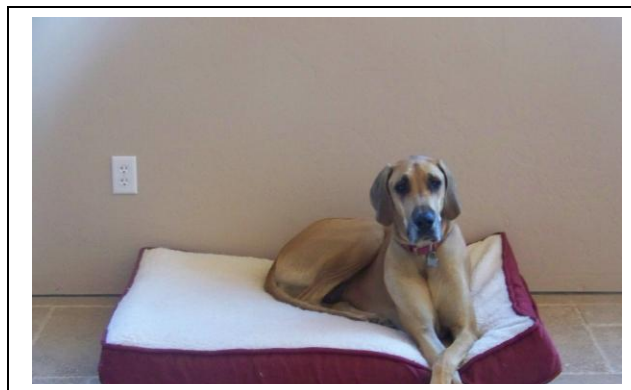
Out of State Shipping update

Currently, we can ship our wines to: Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, District of Columbia, West Virginia, and Wyoming. We are in the process of obtaining

our licenses to ship to California, Colorado and Wisconsin. These should be in place by late Fall when we will be able to ship again, based on the cooler weather.

Bruna's Corner

Bruna the wonder-dog has become a big celebrity in the tasting room, but she's not letting it go to her head. On her rare off-days, we have lots of 'splainin' to do for disgruntled guests, who were looking forward to their dose of Brunna. Thanks to all who have treated her so kindly. We'll try to keep the big oaf as a fixture in the tasting room. Now, if we could only teach her to prune grapevines!!





The cold, wet winter brought a bounty of storms through Elgin. Now.....where's that pot of gold?

