



AUXERROIS

Willamette Valley

2008

WINE BACKGROUND

- When two clones of Auxerrois (*oak-sair-wah*) were brought into Oregon from Alsace in 1977, we knew next to nothing about the variety. Still, after tasting some test wines made at Oregon State University, our interest was piqued.
- DNA testing has shown that Auxerrois, like Chardonnay, Aligoté, Gamay and 10 other varieties, is a cross dating from medieval times between Pinot noir and an ignoble variety called Gouais blanc.
- Auxerrois is also the name of a duchy surrounding the town of Auxerre near Chablis, but the variety has disappeared from that area and all other parts of Burgundy. There are probably less than 500 acres of it planted in the world.
- Its early ripening has allowed it to flourish in Luxembourg (even achieving Premier Cru status), but in Alsace, the variety is now treated as a second-class citizen, consigned to blends often with Pinot blanc. In the U.S., we know of only two other producers.

GROWING SEASON

- The 2008 growing season began slowly with a cooler than normal spring for the months of March and April. Buds began to open around April 26th giving the growing season a bit of a delayed start.
- Temperatures picked up considerably in May and helped the vines catch up by accelerating shoot growth, but heat accumulation fell short of producing an early June bloom. The favorable conditions surrounding bloom near the end of June continued to influence fruit development well into August. Veraison became apparent in mid August followed by gorgeous ripening conditions in September.
- Hand picking began the last week of September and continued well into October, allowing the fruit to fully ripen and bask in what could be called a text book Indian summer for Oregon. Our Auxerrois grapes were picked on October 1st.

VINEYARDS

- We planted Auxerrois soon after its release from Oregon State University back in the mid-eighties. Neither this original vineyard, nor a second planting, ever gave us reason to treat the wine as anything more than a blending tool.
- The 1.65 acres we planted in 2002 on a north slope at our Ribbon Springs Vineyard proved so exciting that we since added another 2/3 acre.
- There are two keys to growing Auxerrois so that it can become exciting wine. The first is planting on a cool site. The second is avoiding vineyard drought stress. Our vineyard management at Ribbon Springs incorporates both, and the white wines from Ribbon Springs seem to gain in complexity each year.

WINEMAKING

- The whole clusters are gently pressed in our membrane press to yield juice as free of bitter tannins as possible, and the juice is allowed to settle for a day.
- The majority of the wine underwent a cool, tank fermentation to retain fruit purity and aromatic freshness. A small portion of the wine (less than 10%) was fermented in neutral barrels for a short time to enhance textural richness. Malolactic fermentation was prevented in order to retain as much of the gorgeous fresh fruit aroma as possible.
- After the cool fermentation, the wine was sur lies aged in tank for added richness and complexity. This Auxerrois was bottled on March 19, 2009.

“This wine has aromas of tarragon and fennel bulb, plus green pear, mineral, and citrus blossom. In the mouth, these flavors reoccur and you’ll find a lively, refreshing texture. With its balance of acid, alcohol and fruitiness, the wine has body and length on the palate, yet remains fresh. Auxerrois is wonderful on its own as an apéritif, or with many courses at the beginning of a meal. It would pair well with crab salad or cured salmon with tarragon dressing.”

Dave Paige, Winemaker



Technical Information

Alc: 13.2% by vol
pH: 3.22
RS: dry (0.02%)
Production: 380 cases (750 ml)

