

AUXERROIS

Willamette Valley

2009

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 2009 growing season began with three months of above average temperatures coupled with lower than average rainfall.
- Bud break occurred around April 20th, giving the 2009 season a one week head start compared to 2008. Rainfall increased throughout the pre-bloom period and temperatures remained higher, resulting in gorgeous bloom conditions and bountiful fruit set.
- Temperatures spiked into triple digits in July, but cooled to normal levels for August as we eased into veraison.
- Sugar accumulation was accelerated at lower elevations leading to a mid-September pick, which we had not seen since the 2006 harvest. Lack of rain around our picking schedule meant grapes could hang until they reached optimal ripeness.
- The grapes for this wine were harvested on September 23rd.

VINEYARDS

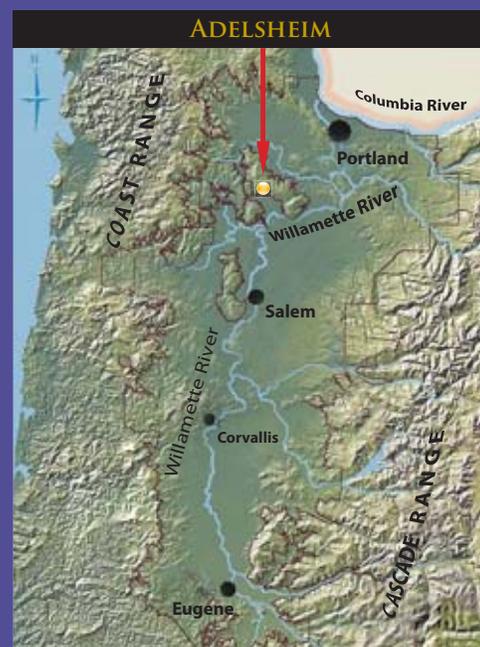
- We planted Auxerrois soon after its release from Oregon State University back in the mid-eighties. Neither this original vineyard, nor a second planting, ever gave us reason to treat the wine as anything more than a blending tool.
- The 1.65 acres we planted in 2002 on a north slope at our Ribbon Springs 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 were gently pressed in our membrane press to yield juice as free of bitter tannins as possible. The juice was subsequently settled in tank prior to racking and yeast inoculation.
- The wine was then completely tank fermented at a low temperature to retain fruit purity and aromatic freshness. Malolactic fermentation was prevented in order to preserve the wine's varietal character.
- After the cool fermentation, the wine was sur lies aged in tank for added richness and complexity. This Auxerrois was bottled on April 1, 2010.

"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: 13.5% by vol
pH: 3.18
RS: dry (0.05%)
Production: 532 cases (750 ml)

