



Background—“TF” is the second wine Adelsheim Vineyard has released made from the variety Tocai Friulano. We fell in love with the grape in 1996 when we were looking at winemaking facilities in Friuli. It is the most pervasive variety in all of Friuli. Though the name implies it might have a commonality with the dessert wine of Hungary or a range of things called “Tokay”, it is actually a member of the Sauvignon family. It’s so vigorous, with huge canes and huge clusters, we were worried that it might not ripen in our climate, which is cooler than Friuli. However, by choosing one of our warmest sites, ripening turned out to be no problem. In fact, the only problem is that the name “Tocai Friulano” has been prohibited in Italy (due to Hungary’s entry into the EU) and that it also violates Oregon’s labeling regulations that prohibit the use of European place names in grape variety names (it’s the reason there is no “Johannisberg” Riesling or Gamay “Beaujolais” in Oregon. With no viable alternative, we’ve chosen to go the abbreviation route, and thus we have “TF”.

Vineyards—All our Tocai Friulano is planted in Ellis Vineyard, a site that is owned by our friends, Del and Jessie Ellis, but is leased to us. We do all the vineyard management and decision-making. It is at the eastern end of the Chehalem Mountains, around 550 feet above sea level on reddish, volcanic-origin Saum soils. These soils provide adequate drainage in winter and spring, but still retain enough moisture into the late summer to keep the vines from shutting down due to drought-stress. The Tocai buds were grafted onto 3/4 acres of Chardonnay plants, originally planted in 1988.

Growing Season—Even in March of 2003, we saw some signs that it would be an early year. Although winter was as rainy as usual, spring was warm enough that the buds started pushing out in early April, and flowering was also a little early. The warm sunny weather at this time made 2003 the third year in a row with a more than ample crop, so it took two passes of thinning to get the crop level down low enough to insure intensity. Then a very warm August and September – all the way through harvest – made it seem like all our grapes got ripe at once.

Winemaking—From 1999 to 2001, we had made wines from our Tocai grapes and they were all thoroughly unmemorable. Then in 2002, an Australian intern inadvertently got us on the right track. Adrian wanted to make some sort of fortified thing. His first step was to be skin contact, a practice we had abandoned for our white wines years ago. With that wacky idea in the back of our minds, we tasted the Tocai grapes in the vineyard. It seemed that all the incredible fruitiness of the grapes was in a layer that was attached under the skin. In the past, with whole cluster pressing, we had been losing all that flavor. So our winemaker, Dave Paige, and his team crushed the whole clusters into the press and started pressing. But instead of pumping the juice to a tank, they opened the press and pumped the juice back over the somewhat pressed grapes. The natural enzymes in the pressed juice helped break down that flavor layer. We followed the same press regime in 2003, buoyed by our success in 2002, and some advice we received from some visiting Friulian winemakers – Tocai, they said, needs 2 hours of skin contact. After pressing, we made the wine the same way as our other stainless-steel fermented whites – inoculating the juice with a commercial yeast to insure a slow, cool fermentation. Given the warm vintage, there was no need to use a malo-lactic fermentation to smooth out the mouth-feel. The wine was bottled in mid-March of 2004.

The Wine—It is great fun to compare our Tocai with its Old World counterparts. The noses of the two are similar, but ours is somewhat more in the direction of lime, kiwi and guava, and a little less about new-mown hay. In the mouth, ours seems richer, rounder and fruitier without being sweet; Friulian Tocais are usually earthier and slightly bitter. In Friuli, we were served Tocai with “Dateri”, a kind of mussel, which are now illegal to fish because they have to break up the seacoast to extract them from the rocks. Here, shellfish of any kind would partner perfectly with our Tocai. It’s also not bad by itself ... cold.

The Label—The label is a simple drawing of the vineyard at our winery late in summer, drawn by Portland artist, Bob Bredemeier.

Production — We produced 304 cases of the 2003 Willamette Valley “TF”.