



2004 WILLAMETTE VALLEY TF

BACKGROUND We fell in love with the Tocai 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 vigorous, with huge canes and huge clusters and, with a climate cooler than Friuli, we have it planted on one of our warmest sites to ensure that ripening is not a problem. 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. Finding no viable alternative, we went the abbreviation route, and call this wine "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 3½ acres of Chardonnay plants, originally planted in 1988.

GROWING SEASON What a crazy year! A stretch of warm weather in February jump-started the vines, so bud break occurred on March 29th, much earlier than usual. A combination of factors – a touch of frost, a tiny critter that caused "short shoot syndrome", and bad weather at bloom – took care of crop thinning for the year with no human intervention necessary. June, July, and much of August were incredibly hot, so we were not totally displeased by our heaviest August rain storm in a couple decades. Beginning in mid-September a nice period of dry weather lingered, allowing the flavors to mature coolly and fully. On October 7th 1.5 tons of Tocai were ready for harvest.

WINEMAKING We've found that the incredible fruitiness of Tocai grapes is carried in a layer attached under the skin. Because this flavor is lost with traditional whole cluster pressing, we begin pressing the whole clusters, but rather than pumping the juice to a tank, pump the juice back over the somewhat pressed grapes. The natural enzymes in the pressed juice help break down that flavor layer – two hours of skin contact has proven to be prime. After pressing, the wine was made in the same way as our other stainless-steel fermented whites, inoculating the juice with a commercial yeast to insure a slow, cool fermentation and allowing partial malolactic fermentaion to smooth out the mouth-feel. This "TF" was bottled in April of 2005.

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 honeydew melon and Herbs de Provence, and a little less about new-mown hay. In the mouth, ours shows firmness and minerality, and is well balanced with richness, acidity and a long, bold finish; Friulian Tocais tend to be earthy 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, herb-crusted white fish, or herbed roasted chicken would partner perfectly with our Tocai.

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 84 cases of the 2004 Willamette Valley "TF".

