

COPPER CANE WINES & PROVISIONS

HARVEST REPORT 2016: CALIFORNIA & OREGON

The News of the 2016 Vintage: Classic Cool-Climate Wines and Higher Tonnage than 2015

With all of the fruit brought in from the vineyards and wines fermenting nicely in tank, we can take a moment to reflect on a vintage that despite a few anomalies here and there, not only turned out to be relatively free of drama but which also promises some good to great wines.

The Year the Fog Came Back to California

This year, we're seeing good fruit but with higher yields than last year. Once again, the harvest started earlier than normal, but the pace was more moderate. For that we have classic coastal weather to thank. The typical marine layer that went missing in much of California last year returned to the Golden State, with cool, foggy mornings, warm and sunny afternoons, then evening cool-down during which the grapes phenologically integrated the heat of the day. The Pinot Noir fruit of this vintage exhibits some much desired red-fruit characteristics like red currant, strawberry and raspberry, along with complex touches of spices, minerals and herbs. Acids are superb, with dark fruits like blackberry and dark plum also expressing themselves beautifully.

Here's the Run-down, Region by Region

Napa Valley, California

This harvest we were excited to pick fruit from top Napa Valley AVAs for our new **Quilt Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon** and **Napa Valley Reserve Cab.** As well, we harvested Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Petit Verdot and Syrah for our **Carne Humana red blend** and Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Chardonnay for our **Carne Humana white.**

As was the case in other northern California regions, dry and warm conditions prevailed in February and March, leading to early bud break and excellent spring growth without frost. Bloom started in mid-May, and the crop developed evenly during early summer warmth before the temperatures cooled later in the summer, giving us some much-desired extra hang time for uniform crop development and ripening.

For Quilt, we focused on four distinctly differently sub-appellations: St. Helena, Oak Knoll, Calistoga and Atlas Peak. We chose these districts because each adds unique characteristics to the final blend, guaranteeing a Napa Cab with complexity and depth. St. Helena, in the upper Napa Valley, is famous for its warm temperatures and long sunny days. Oak Knoll, with elevations ranging from 70 to 800 feet, often experiences a marine layer of fog that sticks around until mid-morning. Calistoga is located at the far northern end of Napa Valley, sheltered from marine influence. Atlas Peak is a mountainous region, with many vineyards planted above the fog line for warmer nights and cooler readings during the day than the valley floor.

With the 2016 Quilt Napa Valley, we'll be looking for aromatics of chocolate-covered cherry, plum, espresso bean, nutmeg and cinnamon, along with flavors of black currant, anise, cedar box and cocoa dust.

Sonoma County

Russian River Valley

Sonoma County's Russian River Valley threw us a few curve balls this vintage, starting with heavy rainfall in January followed by very dry conditions and warm weather in March and February that prompted vine growth. Canopies developed rapidly during the spring, with bloom beginning in mid-April and finishing during the cool month of May. A cold July and August contributed to a lighter crop than usual.

The Russian River Valley Pinot Noir we picked for still wines (both **Belle Glos Dairyman Vineyard** and **Böen**), had very good color, remarkable really, with moderate acids. We were very happy to see ripe plum, ripe raspberry, blackberry and black fruit jam complemented by heavy tannins, spices, jam and bright-red fruit characteristics, giving us plenty to work with in the winery.

For our Russian River Valley sparkling wine **Steorra**, we sourced Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes from many different vineyards which range in age from 10 to 40 years. Each site exhibits minor variations in soil, slope, clonal selection, rootstocks and trellising systems. These small differences allow us to capture a diversity of fruit characteristics resulting in more dimension, structure and complexity in the finished wine. This vintage, the fruit developed nicely yet more slowly than anticipated. So we waited to harvest the fruit until the acid levels were within our parameters of 21.5 to 23.5 degrees Brix. At harvest, the fruit showed pineapple, lemon, pear and green apple qualities, with acid levels ideal for a great sparkling wine.

Other Sonoma County Appellations

Much of the fruit for our **Beran Zinfandel** comes from the Sonoma County regions of Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley and the Rockpile AVA--three regions esteemed for this most Californian of wine grapes. In these warmer AVAs of Sonoma we saw less marine influence than normal at the beginning of the growing season, but then things cooled in late July and August which allowed additional ripening time. Flavors and colors matured beautifully. In tank, we're seeing both red and black fruit flavors, along with hints of clove and spice.

Central Coast

Santa Maria Valley

Our **Belle Glos Clark & Telephone Pinot Noir** hails from the Santa Maria Valley, where for the fourth straight year the drought continued. The season started with temperatures five to eight degrees above normal, leading to rapid vine growth. We wondered if we'd be having another incredibly early harvest. Then temperatures in spring dropped, and the coastal fog layer showed up every day. May was cooler than normal, resulting in lower fruit set than average. A mild summer, including a cool August, provided for good hang-time. All told, the crop ripened about two weeks earlier than normal. We're expecting the 2016 Clark & Telephone to exhibit its classic scarlet-red color and offer aromas and flavors of blackberry, nutmeg, caramel, strawberry jam, black cherry, cranberry and just-baked gingerbread.

Santa Lucia Highlands

In Monterey County's Santa Lucia Highlands where our Las Alturas Vineyard is planted to Pinot Noir, rainfall was well above normal before dropping off at the end of the winter. The growing season kicked off early with a remarkably warm February that led to bud break and early vine growth. A persistent marine layer made for a very cold May. June was warmer than normal, but then the cool weather returned in July and August with veraison starting in mid- to late-July. The crop ripened and matured slowly. For a little while, we had some concern about smoke taint due to a large wildfire in Monterey County, but fortunately this didn't come to pass. We're anticipating the **2016 Belle Glos Las Alturas Pinot Noir** will show deep ruby color and aromas and flavors of blackberry and plum, along with black licorice and rich dark chocolate.

Rogue Valley, Oregon

In this southernmost viticultural region of Oregon, winter rains that were 40 to 50% above normal were followed by warm weather in March through May resulting in early, rapid and uniform vine growth. The summer was a mind-boggling three to five degrees warmer than usual, with cool-downs at night that allowed the fruit to maintain acidity. When all was said and done, what we saw across the Valley was Pinot Noir for our **Elouan** wine that had excellent color, good acid levels, and Brix ranging from 24.0 to 25.5 degrees. We're expecting this Rogue Valley fruit to contribute rich tannins, superb depth and structure to the 2016 Elouan, with rich flavors of plum, cherry, mixed fruit jam and blackberry, along with fruity aromatics and smoky, game-bird characteristics.

Umpqua Valley, Oregon

Heavy winter rain was followed by a mild growing season that ranged from one to three degrees warmer than normal. Veraison occurred in late July, with the crop steadily maturing from August through harvest for good color development in Pinot Noir fruit. Right away we saw bright, appealing acids in balance with fruit reading a lofty 24 to 25 degrees Brix. The Umpqua Valley Pinot Noir component blended into our 2016 **Elouan** will contribute ripe blackberry, blueberry and boysenberry, with good balance, depth and concentration and a nice smoky, earthy finish.

Willamette Valley, Oregon

Willamette, the northernmost grape-growing region of the state, is the one most influenced by cool, stormy weather due to its proximity to the Gulf of Alaska. This year, that kind of weather--which can damage the crop--didn't come into play. Across the valley, vineyards ripened three to four weeks earlier than normal. Higher temps were the reason, with warm spring weather quickly followed by very warm summer temperatures. It did cool in mid-to late July, but by then veraison was already occurring at a rapid rate in many vineyards. August warmed back up and September offered warm days and cool nights. Overall, the crop's maturity was very uniform, with Brix recorded at 24.5 to 25.5 degrees. Pinot Noir from Willamette, which we blend into **Elouan**, promises excellent depth this year, with solid structure and intensity complemented by ripe plum, blackberry, cherry, hints of spice and wonderful, smoked bacon characteristics.