

COPPER CANE

— WINES & PROVISIONS —

HARVEST REPORT

2015
CALIFORNIA
& OREGON

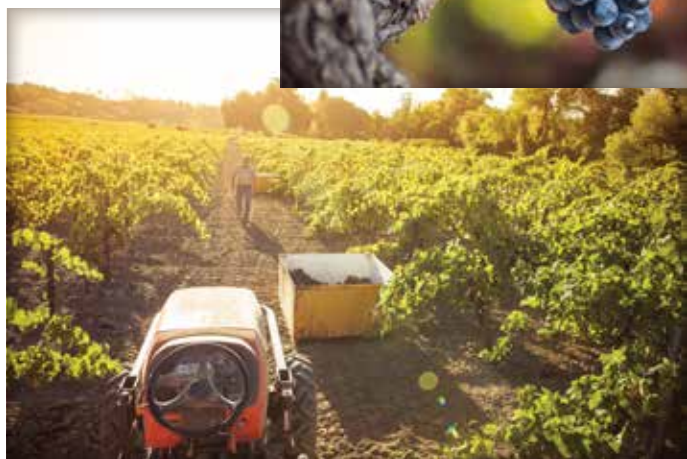
AN EARLY SPRING, WARM DRY CONDITIONS AND LOW YIELDS ACROSS THE CALIFORNIA COAST ALL THE WAY THROUGH NORTHERN OREGON RESULTED IN A POWERHOUSE 2015 VINTAGE

The 2015 vintage certainly kept us on our toes with plenty of drama, starting with poor set in May and ending with raging wildfires during much of the super-fast, compressed harvest. Every fall, we breathe a sigh of relief once all the fruit is picked. This year, we're particularly happy that the last loads of grapes are in and fermenting. And now that the crop is secure, we think it's safe to say that everyone is going to be very happy with the rich, fully extracted, wines we're expecting from this vintage.

The great news is that while California yields were low—nearly 30% below average with some regions significantly lower than that—the quality is stunning due to our dry, picture-perfect growing season. In terms of yields, a cold spell in the month of May either made or broke growers in California. Those vineyards that didn't experience the poor fruit set were fine, and the crop set nicely. For others, the result was poor fruit set and lighter yields.

After the chill of May, gorgeous warm weather prevailed during June, July and August: ideal conditions for growing and ripening. The color and quality of the fruit couldn't have been better. The vines hit all the marks of full maturity from brown, firm seeds, light yellowing in the canopy and the staple "copper cane" from this year's shoot growth. The berries were small, with extraordinary concentration of flavor, which should result in some fantastic wines.

Oregon got the best of it this year, with normal to above-average yields, along with dry growing conditions for stellar fruit color and flavor. The reality is, that Oregon had a California-type growing season. The harvest wrapped up in record time, more than a month ahead of normal, with fruit ripening at an early rate and developing incredible color. We're expecting lower acids than normal for Oregon Pinot Noirs, along with more prevalent dark fruit flavors than are usual.



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LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT CALIFORNIA AND OREGON REGION BY REGION.

NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

The marine layer that commonly flows in from the San Pablo Bay off San Francisco Bay was markedly less prevalent this year. We're attributing that to the El Niño weather phenomenon. Usually when people think about El Niño their thoughts turn to the heavy winters rains that sometimes come with this weather event. And here in drought-stricken California, we're sure hoping that happens. But the true evidence of an El Niño is a warming Pacific, which we observed developing and saw the effects in the weather patterns.

Napa Valley's light crop benefited from the El Niño-influenced warmth with fruit that ripened nicely under a good canopy. With Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and other reds from Napa Valley that we'll blend into our Carne Humana Proprietary Red, we brought in dark and inky, rich and ripe fruit. Acids are on the low side—another by-product of the even and warm growing season. The same holds true of the Napa whites, including the Sauvignon Blanc that will make up part of our Carne Humana white blend. Acids are low while lush, tropical fruits abound.

For our Napa Beran Zinfandel we source fruit from a large number of family-owned vineyards, the majority of which are dry farmed. In St. Helena, these wines tend to be fruit forward with a little more elegance. In the eastern hills of the valley, we pick up a nice minerality and a lot of intense fruit character. In Calistoga, the fruit tends to be more forward and ripe, with a ton of depth, intensity and structure. We also get fruit for this Zinfandel from one small Howell Mountain vineyard and were very pleased with the lush, rich and ripe expression we saw this year.



SONOMA AND MENDOCINO COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA

The marine layer that is typical of these two coastal counties was largely absent this growing season, and nighttime cool-down didn't occur to as great a degree as usual. In fact, nighttime temps were four to five degrees above normal. What this resulted in was grapevines that were more active, even at night. The grape variety that really benefitted from these uniformly sunnier, warmer conditions was Zinfandel. It is, in our opinion, the take-home variety of the year. For our Beran California Zinfandel, and the upcoming Beran Sonoma County release, we're seeing super-black Zin fruit with richness that's unparalleled and acids that are fairly low.

We'll soon be releasing Steorra, a sparkling wine that's a blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from Sonoma County's cool-climate Russian River Valley. Some of the Chardonnay for this wine comes from a really fantastic, ridgetop vineyard planted in the famed Goldridge soil series. This vintage, we held off picking a bit there until the fruit expressed the ripe pear, ripe apple and melon tones we were seeking. Good acid was retained by the small clusters and small berries, and the overall character of the finished wine should be classic Russian River. We also bought some Chardonnay from a 40-year-old vineyard located near Fulton. That fruit ripened beautifully, held its acids, and expresses a degree of elegance we can't resist.

For the Pinot Noir that goes into Steorra, we sourced fruit from a vineyard near our Dairyman vineyard site on the outskirts of Sebastopol. The soils there are clay-loam—well drained but still fairly dense. This year, no surprise, the clusters and berries were small and ripened up quickly. Acids held, and the fruit flavors are an artful balance of dark and red berry tones.



LAKE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

With the exception of the devastating wild fires that swept through Lake County this summer and fall, the dry conditions in this county north of Napa and Sonoma had a positive effect on vine



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growth. Intense fruit color and concentrated flavors resulted. The $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch to an inch of rain that fell in Lake County and other parts of the North Coast on September 16 was the only rainfall that occurred during harvest and it did not affect the quality of fruit because that single day of rain was immediately followed by drying conditions. Lake County fruit for our Beran Zinfandel promises intense color and outstanding fruit flavors.

The rain also marked the turning point in battling the worst of the blazes—the Valley fire. The support for those affected by the fires has been heart warming. Now, the rebuilding begins, especially in the ravaged community of Middletown. Fortunately there was no damage to our growers vineyards nor any negative impact on fruit quality.



ROGUE VALLEY, OREGON

The Rogue Valley is quite dry for Oregon, with a hot-summer Mediterranean-type climate, so the region consistently produces powerhouse Pinots with deep plum notes, abundant yet supple tannins and a sweet red fruit core. This year's weather resulted in very nice ripening, with Brix that were higher than normal and occurring earlier than normal. We brought in fruit with very ripe black berry as well as dark plum fruit flavors. Acids were on the medium side and not as pronounced as Willamette Valley. We're expecting this fruit, which contributes to our Elouan Pinot Noir—a blend of Rogue, Umpqua and Willamette valleys grapes--to contribute good structure and depth to the wine.

UMPQUA VALLEY, OREGON

As was the case with almost all of Oregon, the Pinot Noir from Umpqua also came in at higher Brix than is typical. Umpqua produces fruit with very ripe raspberry, blueberry and cherry notes, along with some rhubarb and freshly tilled earth. Usually noted for its vibrant acidity, this year's Umpqua Pinot will be lighter in acid than is typical for the area.

WILLAMETTE VALLEY, OREGON

Ripening occurred a solid four to six weeks early in this northernmost wine-growing region of Oregon, with ripeness levels never before seen. Pinot Noir was being harvested at 25, even 26 Brix, an unbelievable three to four degrees beyond normal. These levels are not unusual for California but are astounding for this cooler region that often experiences rain during the growing season and other weather repercussions due to its proximity to the Gulf of Alaska.

The high sugar levels were brought about by growing conditions that were consistently warm, along with record heat waves. The Pinot Noirs from Willamette will have good intensity, with the hallmark minerality, nice acidity and the elegance we count on from this region. The bright-red cranberry fruit character should be on the richer side this year, and expect it to be complemented by some nice smoked meat and gamey characters.

