

West Side Wine Club

November 2008

2008 Calendar

January 16th

Plan for the year

February 20th

Wine Faults and Flaws

March 19th

Bordeaux tasting

April 16th

Other Reds tasting

May 8th

Barney Watson at Chemeketa

May 10th

Chemeketa Tour

May 21st

Rick Mafit of Mystic Wines

June 18th

Michael Brown from
Sokol Blosser

July 13th

Sokol Blosser Tour

July 20th

WSWC Annual Picnic!

August 20th

Steve Anderson and
Other Whites

September 19th

Awards Gala!

October 15th

Pinot Noir tasting

November 19th

Pinot Gris / Viognier

December 17th

Elections
Speaker?

Next Meeting:

November 19th, 2008 at 7 p.m.

Place:

Oak Knoll Winery

Subject:

Pinot Gris and Viognier

Snacks:

Jon Kahrs and Don Robinson

Website:

<http://www.westsidewineclub.com/>

Message Board:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Westsidewineclub/>

We will be tasting and judging Pinot Gris and Viognier.

A few reminders:

- 1.) Please have your wines to taste at the meeting no later than 6:55 pm. Wines brought in after that time will be held in reserve to taste as time allows.
- 2.) No commercial wines
- 3.) Be sure to bring two bottles of the wine to be tasted and two glasses.
- 4.) Name tags are distributed before the meeting. Come a little early to help set up so that we can start promptly at 7pm and end by 9pm.
- 5.) Please print your own tasting score sheets prior to coming to the meeting. Go to <http://www.westsidewineclub.com/docs/ScoresheetWSWC.pdf> and print out enough sheets to judge 10 wines.

October Meeting Notes

President Don Robinson opened the meeting and congratulated the club on a successful gala in September. He reminded us that we will be holding elections and appointing new chairs at the meeting in December. Look at the last page of this newsletter for a description of the positions and contact him if you are interested in taking an active role in the club's future.

Craig Bush led the Pinot Noir tasting, and twelve delightful wines were criticized and approved by the club while enjoying snacks provided by Ken and Barb Stinger.

Photos in this issue provided by Ryan Levenick and Bill Spiller.



Ryan Levenick loads grapes for the club at Chandler Reach Vineyard

More pictures at

<http://crvcabernet2008.shutterfly.com/>

Bill Spiller at CRV



Submerged Cap Method of Red Wine Making: An interview with Bill Spiller

Is it really necessary to oxygenate the must by punch down?



Most winemaking problems start during fermentation. Stuck fermentations, volatile acidity, Brettanomyces contamination and the production of H₂S are all caused by fermentation problems, often from bad cap management. You get one chance a year to make wine from grapes, so it is worth the time to investigate what winemakers have tried in the past.

There is an Old World technique called capello sommerso (submerged cap), used in Italy with Sangiovese, which extracts the maximum flavor and color from the skins. Submerged cap techniques in the USA are mentioned as early as 1885 in the University of California College of Agriculture Report. Wines made with the submerged cap method are said to have better flavor extraction and softer tannins.

Bill Spiller has developed a method for home winemakers to keep the cap submerged. He puts the grape must in nylon bags, weights them, and keeps the lid on the fermenter.



"I believe this concept of oxygenating the must during punch down is an urban myth" Bill states. "During fermentation, there is a cloud of CO₂ covering the cap, right up to the edge of the fermenter. Punching down would put CO₂ back into the must, not oxygen."

"Another reason I think it is an urban myth is purely anecdotal" he continues. "I have taken grapes, pressed them, put them immediately under an airlock and watched them ferment to dryness. How can this happen if the must "needs" more oxygen to be pushed down into the must? Why don't the big wineries just put a hose to the bottom on the vat and pump oxygen directly into the must? In my mind, the oxygen is already throughout the must at the start of the process."

A cap forms in a fermentation as the grape skins and pulp rise on the carbon dioxide the yeast forms during alcoholic fermentation. Managing the cap correctly keeps it moist and cool enough for the yeast to remain active, keeps the sugars distributed evenly to the viable yeasts, prevents volatile acidity from starting, and extracts compounds from the skins. However, oxygenating and aggressive punch-down can break the seeds, resulting in over-extraction and bitterness. And, for home winemakers, a busy schedule can interfere with a consistent punching regime.

In Bill's submerged cap method, the must is poured into several 24" x 24 nylon bags (which cost about \$14.00 each,) and zip ties are used to close the bags. Since the cap is entirely submerged, the berries do not stick together and there are no dry pockets. (See pictures at left.)



(Continued on page 3)

Submerged Cap Method continued

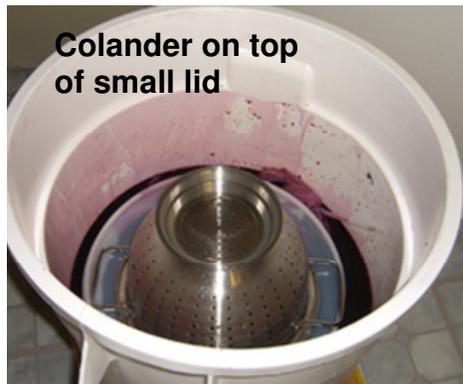
Small lid on top of bags



The lid presses down a stainless steel colander, which sits on top of a smaller fermenting lid, which in turn presses on the bags and keeps them underneath the juice.

Bill estimates the upward pressure of the bags trying to escape the confines of the fluid to be as much as 50 pounds, so puts a full carboy on top of the fermenter's lid to keep the bags from popping the lid off.

Colander on top of small lid



Bill says, "Using an airlock at this point would probably not be a problem for the fermentation process. However, my vat is not set up with an airlock and I believe the cloud of CO2 provides plenty of protection."

Once the Brix has dropped to 4 or 5, he puts a layer of Argon on top of the fermenting juice to protect it. "This is the fourth year of using Argon to protect my wine" he says, "and I am happy to report zero issues with wine going bad because of contact with outside air."

Bill agrees that the submerged cap method extracts the maximum color from the grapes. "There is not doubt in my mind about the color extraction being superior. I made a Pinot Noir from last year's crop which never received enough sunshine. I kept the cap submerged for four weeks. Recently when I opened a bottle and poured a glass for a friend, he looked at the color and exclaimed that I had opened the wrong bottle. He thought I had opened the bottle of Marechal Foch that I had also brought. This made me very happy indeed."

The flavor is also improved by this method he says. "When I've tasted side-by-side wine made from identical grapes with the standard proven method and submerged bag method, I thought there was a slightly more intense, full-mouth flavor in the submerged bag method. This is what I was hoping for and is of course the purpose of the process. Otherwise, I would have bagged it, so-to-speak."

Fermenter ready for lid and weight



Perhaps the need to oxygenate the must is a myth. Judges seem to like Bill Spiller's wine. When asked if he has won any awards he said "I'm still waiting for a blue ribbon! I have a couple of whites and a red. If I would stop screwing up the end of the wine making process I believe I will do better. I forget how important stabilizing the wine is before bottling." But that is a topic to investigate another time.

Bags pushing up colander



Bill crushes at CRV

President's Musings



Hey members, how goes the crush for you this year?

With all of the issues attributed to the late bloom of grapes in the Willamette Valley, from what I have observed, a disastrous vintage was averted, as most WSWC members seemed to have made out OK with their Pinot Noir grapes this crush. Whew!

In last month's muse, I explored the tug-of-war/dance between growers and winemakers on the imperfect process of determining when to harvest. Much of the problem may rest with some grower's apparent inability to provide accurate estimates on the Brix, PH, TA and malic acid of their ripening grapes, because they are most likely using improper sampling techniques. Do you recall the last time a maturity estimate of grape ripeness involved the grower collecting a few "random" berries in a baggie in a non-systematic way and then the winemaker's frustration when harvested grapes inevitably show less mature grapes?

Well, I just happen to have taken a day-long course at the NW Viticulture Center in Salem this past September called, "How to Evaluate Winegrape Maturity." Taught by four instructors--including Al MacDonald and Barney Watson--this was a hands-on workshop on how to determine winegrape maturity by using proper sampling and testing protocols in the vineyard and lab.

Is it possible to accurately estimate winegrape maturity by squashing some berries into a baggie? The real answer is YES! And we proved it in our class! First of all, when estimating the vineyard's overall grape chemistry, it's imperative to divide the vineyard into blocks of similar grapes--with the same variety, same clone, same root stock, similar location in the vineyard, and ideally each block should be no more than 12 rows wide—in order to accurately estimate the grape chemistry of each block.

We learned about Whole Vine and Cluster sampling techniques, but the one that's easiest to perform and consumes the least amount of fruit is the Berry Sample technique on each block. So, to estimate the grape chemistry of a block, begin by walking down the first two rows and stop at the fifth plant (always avoid sampling from the 5 last plants at the ends of rows) and take your first sample. For each sample, randomly choose a cluster on the plant, and then select 5 berries from the cluster (2 from the top, 1 front, 1 back, 2 bottom). Place your first sample's berries in a zip lock bag. Cross over to the 15th plant on the other row to take your second sample. Try not to exceed 100 berries in each double row pass. After finishing these two rows, skip the next two rows in your block and repeat the crisscross sampling on the next two rows.

When finished sampling in the block, crush the berries in the zip lock bag and then squeeze the must through cheese cloth to express the juice. Run your measurements on this juice. Obviously, for large vineyards, this may take some time, so experienced growers will usually develop a modification of this sampling technique to fulfill their needs.

Good luck with vintage 2008 and see you at our next club meeting on November 19th for our annual Pinot Gris and Viognier tasting.

Cheers,

Don Robinson
President, Westside Wine Club
971-219-1553



Westside Winemakers Club

Leadership Team – 2008

President: **Don Robinson** don_robinson_pdx@yahoo.com 971-219-1553

- Set agenda for the year
- Establish leadership team
- Assure that objectives for the year are met
- Set up and run meetings

Treasurer: **Bill Spiller** nrac@msn.com

- Collect dues and fees, update membership list with secretary
- Pay bills

Webmaster: **David Ladd**

Web Content Editor: **Rick Kipper**

Secretary: **Luna Hauser** Hauserwine@comcast.net

- Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
- Monthly newsletter on first Wednesday
- Prepare meeting agenda
- Keep nametags, updated list of members, and other data
- Club message board
- Assign members to bring snacks

Chairs of Group Purchases

The chairperson makes the arrangements to purchase, collect, and distribute.

- Chandler Reach Vineyard – **Mike Fredd** Split_cane@netzero.net
- Del Rio Vineyard – **Craig Bush** pnoir1@verizon.net **CANCELLED**
- Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution

Chairwoman of Competitions: **Miriam Schnepf**

- Work with Washington County Fair staff
- Encourage club participation in County Fair
- President will be the contact for the Oregon State Fair.

Chairperson of Education: **Don Robinson** don_robinson_pdx@yahoo.com

- Arrange speakers for our meetings

Chairs for Tastings: **Craig Bush** pnoir1@verizon.net

- Conduct club tastings
- Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chairs of Winery Tours: **Mike Smolak** SmolakM@DimensionResources.com

- Select wineries to visit
- Arrange tours
- Cover logistics (food and money)
- Winery Tour 1 – **Chemeketa**
- Winery Tour 2 – **Sokol Blosser**

Chairs for Social Events:

- Summer picnic – Oak Knoll **Craig and Mindy Bush** pnoir1@verizon.net
- Awards Gala – **Craig and Mindy Bush** pnoir1@verizon.net
- Holiday Party