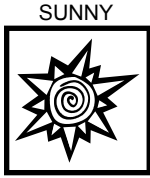


## Stormy Weather



Sleep well



Hide knives  
& other sharp  
objects

When it comes to wine conversations, as Tom Waits says, “Strangers talk only about the weather.” We are frequently asked how this year’s weather is going to affect the grapes. You would think by now I would have come up with a good answer. Most of the time I have no idea what effect the season’s weather will have on any given vintage until we’ve fermented the grapes. In the spirit of Yogi Berra, “It’s not over until it’s over.”

To be sure, weather can impact wine quality depending on the grape variety and vineyard site. Since we grow so many different grape varieties on several different sites, it is difficult for us to generalize when talking about vintage quality due to weather. While 2005 was an overall good vintage for us, certain weather factors greatly enhanced Grenache and Zinfandel quality, and others limited the potential of our Sangiovese. More on that later...

Vineyard practices such as leaf pulling, vertical trellising and crop thinning can mitigate the risk of weather conditions causing problems for grape quality. However, each time these preventative measures are performed in the vineyard, the more expensive it is to farm the grapes. It is convenient to blame Mother Nature when the wine quality isn’t up to snuff, especially if you are not pro-active in the vineyard. That said, California’s wine growing weather is not as risky as other parts of the world, especially Europe. Most years we experience warm, sunny summer days, cool evenings and virtually no rain during the main growing season.

Lately, thanks to the publicity garnered by a certain former U.S. Vice President, we’ve received more inquiries about the effect global warming has on grape growing. Whether or not you agree with big Al Gore (and Al is definitely bigger these days), the scientific evidence says man is contributing to global warming. Research indicates California wine growing regions have been experiencing slightly increased temperatures over the past fifty years—specifically higher nighttime lows. While this development may have a negative impact on our lives through more violent rain storms, it could actually result in an unforeseen benefit to those of us making wine.

Some winemakers, Sébastien Pochan among them, believe that California grapes achieve physiological ripeness at higher sugar levels than our European counterparts because of the greater variance between daytime high and nighttime low temperatures here. Our cool Northern California summer evenings are caused by the Pacific Ocean’s temperature, which is at least 10 degrees cooler than the Mediterranean Sea. The cooler evenings slow down flavor development in grapes, while our daytime highs during harvest drive sugars up. Nighttime temperatures in Europe rarely dip below 68 degrees which allows the vines to continue sugar synthesis in the grapes. This means that the grapes have more flavor at lower sugars, hence they can be lower in alcohol than similarly made California wines.

If you follow my logic, and I’m not sure *I* can follow it, we California winemakers should eventually be able to make full-flavored wines at lower alcohol levels than we do today. (Wow! There is nothing like taking a few bits and pieces of information and coming up with a grand hypothesis manifesting my belief in the glass being half full.) Don’t look for this piece to be published in *National Geographic* or *Scientific American* anytime soon.

**Mick**

## 2005 Grenache: *Shat-terd*



All too many times you've heard me describe a new release as "our best wine ever." I guess I'm doomed from the start since I think all Italians have a genetic tendency to express one's

own opinion as reality, and all winery folks are prone to hyperbole. Maybe I should just say this is my *favorite* Unti wine we've ever made, and leave it at that.

It is easy to blame, or in this case give credit to, the weather. Late spring rains in 2005 caused a phenomenon called "shatter" with our Grenache grapes. Shatter refers to the failure of the grapes to develop due to harsh weather conditions during spring bloom that cause flowers not to be pollinated. Mick Jagger is quite the expert in this area. Grenache is particularly prone to this phenomenon which irritates most growers because it reduces the crop. But for a winemaker, this can be a reason to celebrate. The lower crop load can result in more concentrated flavors, which is precisely what happened in 2005.

We reduce Grenache crop every year by going through the vineyard in late July and cutting whole bunches off. This facilitates more concentrated flavors and even ripening. But for some reason, when Mother Nature does it, the results can be more compelling. Go figure. I guess we don't know everything, though one wouldn't know it from talking with us. Our Grenache grapes in 2005 were totally black with fairly thick skins, which make for a terrific wine.

### Foudre fodder

Coincidentally, 2005 was the year we purchased two new 620 gallon barrels, specifically for aging our Grenache. These large barrels, called "foudres" in French, are traditionally used in the Southern Rhone for Grenache because less surface-to-volume ratio reduces oak extraction and oxidation, thus preserving the range of vineyard driven aromas and flavors.

This 2005 Grenache is so dark and full-bodied that you won't believe it is 84% Grenache. It has the power and complexity you'd expect from a 2005 Chateaufeuf, which is really saying something. While the fruit is very intense, this wine has so much more: pepper, smoke, dried herbs, licorice...you get the idea. It is also the most tannic Grenache we've ever made, so try to hold on to this wine

for at least a couple of years. Thanks to our good fortune, every batch of Grenache, regardless of clone or rootstock (we have about 6 different combinations), was worthy of being included in the blend—meaning we were able to make about 1,050 cases in 2005.

## 2004 Syrah:

### *Still crazy after all these years...*



When we began making Syrah in 1997, we were one of only three or four wineries in Dry Creek Valley making the stuff. The loyal following we have built over the years can be largely attributed to this Northern Rhone varietal. Today, there are over twenty-five wineries in the appellation offering a Syrah, which begs the question: Is Unti still distinguished among the top producers in this valley?

### **Vineyard Sites with Personality *or* It Helps to have a Strong Bench...**

The reason we based our winery on estate grown Syrah back then still holds true today. Our benchland vineyard gives us a Syrah with a unique personality. The blackberry/smoked meat/chocolate powder aromas and flavors are not only easy to identify, they are greatly cherished.

Since our favorite Northern Rhone Syrahs showcase their vineyard character, we've completely designed our winemaking to do the same. Our fermentations are done by indigenous yeast; we employ a variety of fermentation techniques, including some small batches using whole clusters (more on that when we release the 2005 Syrah); we only use French oak to age our Syrah; we don't fine or filter the wine. If we get some pungent aromas and flavors that are beyond fruit and oak, we're thrilled. Not everyone makes Syrah like this in the valley. Additionally, we have a wider variety of Syrah clones planted on low-vigor rootstock than anyone else in Dry Creek. If nothing else, we *should* be able to make Syrah with personality.

### **2004 vs. 1997**

This 2004 has much in common with the 1997: an early harvest date (we picked our Syrah four days later in '04 than in '97, and had we known then what we know now about picking at physiological ripeness, we would

have picked the '97 later); a structured wine with lots of fruit; our distinctive blackberry/smoked meat 'Rhone-y' character of the vineyard. What it doesn't share with that inaugural Syrah is "cellar terroir." It has, shall we say, all of the good "junk-in-the-trunk" that the '97 had without the microbial flaws (i.e., brett and hydrogen sulfide). The 2004 is much cleaner, thanks to improved fermentation techniques, temperature control in the winery, better rotation of barrels, and Sébastien's supervision. As such, this wine will display a purity of fruit for a very long time.

As we've mentioned with all of our other 2004 wines, our Syrah suffered quite a bit of shrivel and dried grapes. Syrah seems better equipped to handle this condition because the wine has nice ripe tannins, big fruit and even an impression of zesty acidity. It does not show prune-like or overripe qualities. Similar to the 2002 Benchland Syrah, it should age well over the next 5 to 7 years.

## Sangiovese:

### *To Blend or not to Blend...*



Over the past few years we have developed quite a following for our blended Sangiovese-based wine with the funny name. This **2005 Segromigno** is really nicer than ever, but it wasn't without an arduous decision...

If you haven't heard us say it before, we'll say it now: Sangiovese is a mercurial wine grape. One year it can make a complex, full-bodied and flavorful red that is among the world's most distinguished wines. It will have you speaking Italian by the time you reach bottle's end. The next year, the same vines can make a thin, vegetal, and slightly astringent wine that leaves you scratching your head, and cursing in German. Among the grape varieties we grow, it is the most sensitive to site, climate and growing conditions.

Sangiovese almost couldn't be more Italian. It needs everything to be just right for it to be happy. The Sangiovese vine's strong vigor and sensitivity to drastic temperature fluctuations can result in increased vegetal aromas and flavors. As a grape, Sangiovese is high in tannin, acid and fruit extract. Anyone desirous of making top notch wines from Sangiovese better choose his site

wisely, *and* be prepared to do some aggressive pruning and crop-thinning. That explains for why Sangiovese has failed to fulfill its billing as the next Merlot here in California, although, in hindsight, that is probably a good thing.

Our track record with this finicky grape is as good, or better, than most California wineries. From 1999 through 2004, we managed to make a compelling wine from 100% Sangiovese grapes each year, except for the 2000 vintage. We've been able to do this by harvesting a small section from our west hillside that is by far and away our best site for Sangiovese. The hillside soils mitigate the vine's vigorous tendency, and the east-facing exposure helps protect the vines from extreme temperature fluctuations.

Despite our attempts to tame the beast, we can still draw a vintage like 2005, where even our best section of Sangiovese doesn't live up to our goal of making a Brunello-like wine. The hillside wine tasted like the wine from the rest of the vineyard: bright and fruity, but lacking deep color and tannin to justify a single varietal bottling.

So, we made the difficult decision to eschew making 500 cases of a decent \$30 a bottle Sangiovese in favor of using all of our Sangiovese for an absolutely rockin' Segromigno that sells for \$20. As in previous vintages of Segromigno, we blended a little Syrah (for added color and body) and Barbera (for color and acidity). Our hillside Sangiovese lot is usually aged in at least 25% new French oak which gives this Segromigno more depth and richness than earlier vintages. In fact this wine has some aging potential—2 to 4 years. While the road to making Segromigno wasn't a smooth one, the wine sure is in 2005.

## 2006 Rosé



This is your last chance to pick up our version of a Provencal dry Rosé. The blend is the same as in 2005, 65% Grenache and 35% Mourvedre, yet the wine has more of a Bandol-like quality. The Mourvedre was a bit more expressive in 2006, and provides a spicy flavor with a touch more body than the 2005. We have already sold more than half of our production. It won't be around after July.

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Charge to Credit Card below  or Check enclosed

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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New Releases:	# Bottles	Price	Extension
2006 Rosé	<input type="text"/>	@ \$18 =	<input type="text"/>
2005 Segromigno	<input type="text"/>	@ \$20 =	<input type="text"/>
2005 Petit Frere	<input type="text"/>	@ \$20 =	<input type="text"/>
2005 Grenache	<input type="text"/>	@ \$30 =	<input type="text"/>
2004 Syrah	<input type="text"/>	@ \$26 =	<input type="text"/>
<b>Current Releases:</b>			
2004 Zinfandel	<input type="text"/>	@ \$24 =	<input type="text"/>
2004 Petite Sirah	<input type="text"/>	@ \$26 =	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>	<b>Subtotal =</b>	<input type="text"/>
(6-11 bottles = 5%, 12-35 = 10%, 36+ = 15%) Discounts =			<input type="text"/>
New Subtotal =			<input type="text"/>
(CA = 7.75%; Other states, call for rate) Taxes =			<input type="text"/>
(Use chart--add \$4 for Residential address) Shipping =			<input type="text"/>
<b>TOTAL =</b>			<input type="text"/>

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State	6 Pk Box (4-6 btl/s)	12 Pk Box (7-12 btl/s)
Northern CA	\$14 - Ground	\$19 - Ground
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IA, MO, NE, ND, MN, TX	\$21 - Ground \$34 - 3Day \$43 - 2 Day	\$33 - Ground \$58 - 3Day \$71 - 2Day
CT, DC, FL, GA, IL, LA, NC, NY, OH, VA, WI	\$23 - Ground \$38 - 3Day \$43 - 2Day	\$38 - Ground \$64 - 3Day \$74 - 2Day
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