

## **Harvest Update 2009**

A couple of years ago, we had a tasting here at the winery of all the KRW Pinot Noirs we ever made. All were from exactly the same section of our estate vineyard in Carneros. The oldest was from 1986 and the youngest was a just-bottled 2006.

This tasting was the best ego-stroke ever in my career as a winemaker. With only one exception (the 1993) every wine was fantastic, none were over-the-hill, all still had beautiful fruit and phenomenal structure. What struck me most was how well the oldest wines had aged. The 1986 through 1994 wines were still absolutely drinkable, amazingly youthful and vibrant. The tasting panel unanimously agreed that the 1987 KRW Pinot was, without question, the single best Pinot Noir they had ever had, even when considering the greatest vintages of Burgundy.

With this experience in mind, I have racked my brain to remember (I never have been a great record keeper) exactly how I made our Pinot Noir over twenty vintages ago. In those days our technology was absurdly primitive. Last year I did some experimenting with making wine "the old way" and loved the results. Consequently, this year I am returning our entire production of KRW Pinot Noir to the way we did it "back in the day." Making wine this way vastly increases the amount of hard hand-work that is required, but I am certain that the outcome will be well worth the effort.

While it has been difficult resurrecting the exact techniques I used in those days, I have come up with a substantial list of changes for this year:

- In the vineyard, we are picking at a slightly lower sugar – about 23.5 rather than the 24.5 brix that has become more the modern style. This both lowers the alcohol in the finished wine and brings up the acidity a bit.

- On the crush-pad, we are just destemming the fruit with virtually no crushing of the grapes. The grapes are gravity falling into very small (6/10<sup>th</sup> of a ton) fermentors and no longer being macerated by being pumped into tank. Also, I am adding no sulfur dioxide at the crush.

- Inoculation with yeast is immediate, rather than waiting a day as I have recently done. We have gone back to the older selection of yeast that we used to use.

- Since the grapes are being fermented in tiny lots, all punching is done by hand. This is hard, hard, hard work....it keeps one of us busy about 16 hours a day doing major aerobics training. (I keep telling my cellar workers that they shouldn't complain, they would pay to go to the gym and they get paid to punch-down the Pinot Noir.)

- Once fermentation is over we will press at dryness rather than allowing the wine to macerate on its skins. Rather than using a modern pneumatic press we will use the same old-fashioned one-ton hand-cranked basket press that we used in the 1980s.

- From the press, the wine will go directly into older barrels, not into tank before it is barreled. There is a lot of evidence that this really helps with long term stabilization of Pinot Noir tannins and color. The wine will be moved to new wood later in the year.

- Unless something goes badly awry, I don't plan to add any sulfur dioxide to the wine until it is about five months old. Once again this is to promote long term color stability.