

Notes from the Cellar

The Winter, 2008 Newsletter from Eaglemount Wine & Cider

2008 Harvest Report

It's been another interesting year with lots of firsts. We opened our tasting studio, bought a new bottling machine, have new varieties of wine to sell, etc. There were plenty of challenges and we learned something new every day. Our winery is growing with a new vintage of wine and cider – some in bottles, some patiently waiting to be bottled, some aging in barrels, and some still fermenting. There's always something to do and never enough time.

Fall is production time. For the hard cider, it's gathering apples, pears, and quince; pressing for juice; and fermenting hard cider. For the grape wines, it's picking grapes in our small vineyard, taking trips to eastern Washington to get more grapes, crushing the grapes to primary fermenters, daily monitoring and *punchdowns* for the red grapes, pressing the grapes after fermentation, monitoring the secondary fermentation process, and then *racking* the wine to barrels. Whew! It's a busy time with many challenges and many opportunities to learn.

Early on the apple season looked bad because of the chilly, wet spring, but the bees and other pollinators did their job. The cool summer left us with smaller than usual apples going into the fall, but the rains plumped the apples up, and, although each variety was two to three weeks late, we had a fair crop.

For pears, it's either a pear year or it isn't. For the second year in a row we had very few pears. Pears blossom earlier than apples and it was probably too cold again for most pollinators. We did purchase some organic pears and quince to make cider so we could offer some next year.

Vineyards such as ours in the Puget Sound appellation had a dismal year. As with the tree fruit, the cool, wet spring and cool summer resulted in a very late fruit set and a late *veraison* (ripening period). The result: not enough heat to ripen most varieties. Our little vineyard is cooler than other vineyards around because of our elevation. We have many varieties planted but have decided to concentrate on only the very earliest ripening grape varieties. The



Tasting Studio

Our Tasting Studio has been open since July. We are open on the weekends from 12 to 5 this winter. Just before the holidays we will be open daily. We will be adding other items for sale as we progress. Right now we are selling jams from Wildwood Farms and statuary from Eaglemount Statuary.

major one is Siegerebbe, a German grape that makes a delicious dry or sweet wine with floral notes.

At Ariansas Vineyard on the Columbia River in eastern Washington, the season was two weeks later than usual, but the grapes came in rich, dark, and flavorful. We get most of our grapes from this small vineyard. We are trying two new grapes this year, Primitivo and Petit Verdot.

New Bottler

Just in the nick of time, we bought a new bottler for our ciders. Bottling the cider had been quite labor intensive. Going one bottle at a time, we were barely able (and sometimes not!) to keep up with the demand. The new bottler looks like an Apollo space capsule. It has taken the pain out of the bottling process.



The Art of the Oak Barrel

Aging wine in barrels is an art. There's a magic that happens in the barrel as flavors are concentrated and elements from the oak combine with the wine. Our red wines are aging in a fine selection of barrels. We have barrels made from oak grown in France, Hungary, and Russia, along with native oak from Minnesota and Missouri. Different species of oak grow in these regions, each imparting unique qualities to the wine.

Cooking with Cider

If you've ever cooked with wine or beer, you will love cooking with cider. Use it in any dish that calls for wine or beer or try these ideas.

World's Best Sauerkraut: One of our favorites is Sauerkraut cooked in cider. Of course homemade sauerkraut is the best. Drain the juice from the sauerkraut and add a cup or so of cider. Bake in the oven or simmer on the stovetop. Replace cider as it evaporates to enrich the flavors. Sausages can be browned and baked with the sauerkraut.

Onion confit: Braised onions in butter until caramelized. Add a cup of cider (more or less) and let simmer as the cider evaporates. A perfect garnish.

And there is always a reduction sauce. Simmer the cider until the volume is reduced to whatever consistency you want. Baste fish to be broiled, make a sauce for vegetables, etc.



Winery specials

10% discount on half case (6 bottles)
15% discount on full case (12 bottles)

Wines

We decided to offer red blends this year. Our reserve is a Bordeaux-style blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. We named it **Raptor** because of its intensity and as an homage to the eagles, hawks, and owls that rule the valley. **Eaglemount Red** is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah. Both are 2006 vintage and are great right now but will get better with time. We will be bottling our 2006 varieties this winter.



Cider

Our cider is made in batches and there is some variability between batches. We try to make it as consistent as we can. All the ciders have been well received. One word I hear often is "delicious." Ginger has turned out to be one of the most popular styles. We are planning on adding more ciders.

As the first licensed cidery on the Olympic Peninsula, ours was the first hard cider many people had ever tasted. In fact, some did not know there even was such a thing. Hard cider is an ancient tradition in England and other parts of Europe. It was natural that the primary alcoholic drink of our young country was hard cider.

We want to thank everyone for supporting our business. At our Tasting Studio and at the Farmers market, we have met many, many wonderful people. The bonus that we hadn't really counted on was sharing stories with everyone as we shared our products. Thanks especially to everyone who has helped us this year bottling, crushing fruit, etc.: Jesse, Norm, Sebastian, Ben, Jared, Kate, Justin, Haley, Mama, Isaac, Art, Charles, Jan, Erin, Quen, Roy, Kristina, and everyone else who lent a hand.

Trudy and Jim Davis

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