

# August Briggs Summer 2010 E-Letter



*Volume 14, Spring 2010*

## *A New Wine (?) for August Briggs*

It was not too long ago that Californian rosé, pink or blush wines were ridiculed by the wine world and considered unsophisticated, poorly made and sweet drivel. However, with developing technology, a sagging economy, and more adventurous tastes, the American public has suddenly found pink wines fashionable, affordable and food-friendly. Last year at August Briggs Winery, Joe experimented in the cellar by making a small batch (28 cases) of this suddenly popular style to see if the public perception of pink had changed. We had no idea what reaction to expect, positive or negative, so we kept it quiet and sold it only for a limited time in the tasting room, not knowing if we would ever produce it again. Needless to say, Joe worked his winemaking magic once again and our Napa Valley Rosé of Syrah was such a hit that it sold out in 3 weeks. We are spilling the secret now since Joe was able to slightly increase the production and deemed the quality of the wine world-class. The Rosé would now qualify for release, keeping in mind the lofty expectations that we and our customers expect from every August Briggs wine. Our excitement abounds for the first ever release of the 'new' Rosé of Syrah. Due to the miniscule production, this wine will be only offered this one time. Do not miss out if you are interested- be sure to order some today. We fully expect you will enjoy this new wine in the August Briggs lineup as much as we have enjoyed making it for you.

## *About the Vintage – The 'Knuckleball'*

How to describe 2008? The best description we heard for the vintage was a 'knuckleball'. For you non-baseball fans, a knuckleball is a rare and specific type of pitch that is mastered by very few pitchers. The ball does not spin but rather flutters about on its own trajectory without any rhyme or reason, and easily fools the batter with its baffling flight pattern, rather than speed or spin. This pitch is difficult for the pitcher to master as oftentimes he will not know its final destination, but when executed properly it is the most dynamic and perfect pitch. The 2008 vintage can be summed up in such fashion. The year began with an atypical dry spring (record setting in Sonoma County) and damaging frosts in April (the worst in 30+ years) which wreaked havoc on bud break and bloom, thereby decimating crop loads and limiting yields. Heat spikes mixed with light rain throughout the summer, and forest fires raging in many northern California regions brought more puzzling and challenging weather conditions. Finally, after all of the unusual weather, a perfectly long and moderate harvest allowed the grapes to ripen evenly and at their own pace, which created an intense and lusty character to the fruit. Like a knuckleball, for those who can appreciate excellence in an unorthodox manner, you will be blown away by the extraordinary quality, uncommon character and rarity of these wines. Also note we have begun to release

some '09 vintage wines where the year was much more accommodating!

Wines are sold on a first come, first served basis. All wines are listed in our online store and can be purchased there or please contact Aaron, Jesse, or Matthew directly at the winery (707) 942-4912 or via email at [matt@augustbriggswines.com](mailto:matt@augustbriggswines.com) if you have any questions with your purchase.

## *2009 'Leveroni Vineyard' Carneros Chardonnay*

The August Briggs Carneros Chardonnay comes from the highly acclaimed, family-owned Leveroni Vineyard located on the Sonoma County side of Carneros, just south of the town of Sonoma. Half of the grapes come from an old block of Wente clone vines, and the other half come from a newer Robert Young clone planting. This is the fourteenth year that we have worked with the Leveroni family, and once again, we are excited about the quality. This wine is bright and golden in color. On the nose, there are aromas of pineapple, honey dew, citrus, caramel, and vanilla. The wine is very well balanced with a rich mouth-feel. Crisp and bright, the flavors of pear, green apple, and ripe melon mix with mild oak flavors and a hint of minerals and cream. It has a nice, long, fruity finish. This is a great food wine that will complement fine cuisine without overpowering it. Pair with any shell fish dish. A great porch wine as well! To preserve the freshness of fruit flavors and reduce extraction of bitterness, the clusters are chilled to 45° F immediately after picking. The grapes were then gently whole-cluster pressed, cold settled, inoculated with yeast, and racked to barrels for fermentation. Barrels used were 30% new oak from the Allier forest of France, the remainder being 2-3 year old French barrels. After completion of primary fermentation in the barrel, the wine was inoculated with a malo-lactic culture. The barrels were stirred and topped every other week as the wine was aged on its lees for 6 months prior to bottling. 289 cases produced. \$32.00 per bottle

## *2009 Napa Valley Rosé of Syrah*

A new addition to the August Briggs lineup, the 2009 August Briggs Rosé of Syrah is a delightful wine that will leave you tickled pink upon finishing your first sip. The wine is medium rose-red in color and effuses bright strawberry, flower petal, and watermelon aromas on the nose. On first sip you will savor flavors of raspberry, grapefruit, and spices combined with the slightest hint of oak. This wine is fresh with a clean, dry finish that pairs well with summer afternoons and any light or spicy meal.

The August Briggs Rosé was vinted from Syrah grapes grown in the south end of the Napa Valley just north of the City of Napa. The Sarco vineyard is located on a gentle slope in south Napa on Monticello Road where the weather is a bit cooler than up valley and produces a brighter style of fruit. The grapes were allowed to mature to approximately 23.5 brix of sugar before being hand-picked, hand sorted, de-stemmed, crushed, soaked for 24 hours, and pressed away from the skins. The juice was cold settled for 48 hours, racked off the lees, and inoculated with yeast

for fermentation. The entire fermentation took place over the course of three weeks in stainless steel at a temp. of 55°F to retain the bright, fresh character of the grapes. After fermentation, the wine was racked to neutral barrels (2 to 3 years old) and aged 3 months before bottling to soften the mouthfeel. Only 96 cases produced. \$20.00 per bottle

### ***2008 Napa Valley Pinot Meunier***

A close relative of Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier is traditionally grown in the Champagne region of France to lend added body and complexity to sparkling wine cuvees. We have found that when Pinot Meunier is picked fully ripe, it creates an elegant, aromatic wine with pretty fruit flavors, along with much of the silky complexity of its burgundian brother.

With the 2008 Napa Valley Pinot Meunier, a complex array of aromas and flavors come forward. There is raspberry & cherry, violets & orange peel, as well as aromas of fresh cut plum. This wine is fruity, elegant, and spicy, with a hint of mocha & vanilla. It is moderately full bodied for a Pinot Meunier and will improve with age. It would pair nicely with roasted fowl, seasoned pork, or mild to moderately flavored cheeses.

The fruit for this wine was picked at 25.0° brix. After hand sorting, the clusters were de-stemmed into a small open-top fermenter. After a two day cold soak, the must was inoculated with Assmanhausen yeast, which we prefer for our pinots. The cap was punched-down by hand, twice daily. Following primary fermentation the wine was inoculated for malo-lactic fermentation and barreled down to traditional burgundian barrels. The barrels used were 30% new oak from the Allier forest in France, and 70% two and three year old French barrels. The wine was aged in barrel for 9 months, and then bottled without fining or filtration. Only 234 cases were produced. \$38.00 per bottle

### ***2008 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir***

The Russian River Valley has established itself as one of the premier locations for Pinot Noir in the world. The wines from this appellation consistently show the fruit driven exuberance of California, while displaying the earth and complexity of the grape from its homeland in Burgundy. The grapes for this wine were sourced from the Cummings, Dutton, and Archer vineyards.

Our Russian River Pinot Noir can be our most "Burgundian" style pinot noir, but in 2008 this wine shows plenty of pretty cherry, violet, and strawberry upfront with a bit less earth and leather aromas. It has a nice core of fruit flavors such as ripe cherry and raspberry with a bit of spice at the end. The finish is long, rich, and warm. It is well structured and can be paired with lightly spiced dishes of grilled chicken, pork, and even beef.

After hand sorting, the clusters were de-stemmed into a small open-top fermenter. After a two day cold soak, the must was inoculated with Assmanhausen yeast. The cap was punched-down twice daily, by hand. After a gentle pressing the wine was inoculated for malo-lactic fermentation and barreled down to traditional burgundian barrels. The barrels used were 30% new French oak and 70% two and three year old French barrels. The wine was aged in barrel for 8 months, and bottled without fining or filtration. Only 503 cases produced. \$38.00 per bottle

### ***2008 'Dijon Clones' Napa Valley Pinot Noir***

One of the factors improving the overall quality of Pinot Noir in California is the planting of the so-called "Dijon Clones" of Pinot Noir. The clones come from cuttings taken from vines in Burgundy, and then propagated by the Dijon University. The most common in Napa are clones 115, 667, and 777. They are known for their purity of fruit and focused structure.

Our 2008 Napa Valley "Dijon Clones" Pinot Noir, grown at the Green Island vineyard in the very cool south end of Napa, has a very beautiful nose of plum and black cherry combined with a noted bit of toasted vanilla oak. There are forward flavors of dark fruit, strawberry, spice, and vanilla oak. It has plenty of fruit forward with a lively structured finish. Serve with lamb, roast pork, or full flavored cheese.

After hand sorting, the clusters were de-stemmed into a small open-top fermenter. After a two day cold soak, the must was inoculated with Assmanhausen yeast. The cap was punched-down twice daily, by hand. After a gentle pressing, the wine was inoculated for malo-lactic fermentation and barreled down to traditional burgundian barrels. The barrels used were 30% new French oak and 70% two and three year old French barrels. The wine was aged in barrel for 8 months, and then bottled without fining or filtration. 805 cases produced. \$40.00 / bottle



### ***2008 'Old Vines' Napa Valley Zinfandel***

The 2008 Napa Valley Zinfandel is a blend of three very special vineyards. The first, the Luvisi vineyard, was planted in 1908 and is located just across the street from the winery. The other two are blocks of the Frediani Vineyard, also located in Calistoga, about 200 yards south of the winery on the Silverado Trail. The "old" Frediani vineyard block was planted sometime in the 1940s and the "new" block was planted in the 1950s. All three vineyards are head-trained and dry-farmed, thus yielding small, very concentrated Zinfandel grapes.

Our Zinfandel is flashy & fragrant with aromas of ripe black berry, black cherry, plum, cedar, and mocha oak tones. On the palate, it is rich & expressive with flavors of dark berry fruit and hints of coffee-mocha. This Zin is a bit old school in style showing great depth, but also having a balanced well structured finish.

Each block was harvested and fermented separately. The clusters were hand sorted before being de-stemmed into open-top fermenters, and punched-down twice daily by hand. Following fermentation and pressing, they were inoculated for malo-lactic fermentation and barreled down. The barrels used were 30% new American oak, and 70% two to three year old French oak barrels and aged for 16 months. Due to the damaging spring frosts, Only 420 cases were produced. \$35.00 per bottle

### ***August Briggs Winery on Facebook & Twitter***

For all of you ardent August Briggs fans who can't get enough of us with just our website, you can now check us out in Facebook and Twitter. We invite you to add us and join in the fun as you will be kept up to date on all things August Briggs as soon as they happen. Here are the links:

<http://twitter.com/augustbriggs>

<http://www.facebook.com/AugustBriggsWinery>