

Albourne Estate

SUSSEX



ENGLAND

NEWSLETTER 2

11th November 2014

Things have now just about calmed down enough after harvest and the school half term holidays that I can finally write my 'Post-Harvest Newsletter' and look back with a more balanced perspective on the 2014 vintage!

As grape harvests in England go, 2014 was a good one – there were plenty of grapes on the vines and they ripened well during our mild dry September. So on the plus side we picked lots of excellent quality grapes and we are excited about the potential for the 2014 wines.....

As always though – harvest never goes completely to plan.....and on top of my Assistant Winemaker going down with glandular fever mid-harvest we had to cope with the usual equipment breakdowns, late nights, early starts, aching backs....and then into October, mud and quickly spreading rot in the grapes due to the persistent rain.....but it probably wouldn't be harvest without these little challenges to test us!!

I am sorry that I did not manage to organize a day for volunteer pickers this year.....but I have your names down and will make sure it happens next year.

The grape juice we have in tank is now wine – having completed alcoholic fermentation. During this fermentation, which takes a couple of weeks, we take daily measurements of the 'density' of the juice so that we can plot the gradual decline of the sugar level as it is turned into alcohol. This reassures us that the fermentation is progressing properly. If fermentations get 'stuck' it can be quite difficult to re-start them. The rate of fermentation is constantly monitored by computer-controlled carbon dioxide sensors on the tanks. If the fermentations are too slow or too fast, the speed is adjusted automatically via heating or cooling the wine.

The 'base wines' which will be bottled for sparkling wines are also undergoing a second type of fermentation called 'malo-lactic fermentation', either in tandem with or immediately after the alcoholic fermentation. Without boring you with technical details, malic and lactic are two types of acids found in wine and bacteria (not yeast this time) convert the harsher malic acid into lactic acid, reducing the acidity of the wine. This process is necessary in all sparkling base wines to prevent it occurring later once the wine is in bottle which would adversely effect the bubble size and stability.

The still wines are now being 'racked' – which simply means we pump the wine into another tank so that we can remove all the dead yeast and debris from the base of the tank that sinks there after fermentation finishes. We then start the process of blending, stabilization and clarification to get them ready for bottling in the New Year.....so that the wine that you will buy in bottle is crystal clear and bright and will not form hazes and deposits when exposed to temperature fluctuations during storage and distribution.

The next month or so will be quiet in the vineyard - the recent heavy rain has meant it is not possible to carry out any of the post-harvest work I would have liked to have done. One of these is compost spreading. I have a huge pile of 'council compost' (this is made from the Green Waste bins they collect from your house) sitting at one end of the vineyard. However, until we get a much drier spell we cannot get the machinery in there to spread it! Am now hoping for some

cold and frosty weather. Pruning of the vines will start towards the end of January when we will also be putting in the trellising posts in the new area of vines planted last Spring.

So in this 'quiet' period I am busy promoting Albourne Estate wines.....hope you all saw the articles in 'Sussex Life' (Nov issue) and the Mid-Sussex Times last week. Also TV appearances for the Estate Selection 2013 on The Alan Titchmarsh Show last Friday ITV (matched very well with his favourite cheese, Wensleydale) and this week for me on Latest TV (FreeView Channel 8, Virgin Media 159 and online at www.thelatest.tv) being interviewed under stressed conditions of mid-harvest!! (12th and 14th November at 7pm and 10pm). On Friday I am also off to the BBC Good Food Show at Olympia (www.bbcgoodfoodshowlondon.com/Content/The-World-of-Wines-Experience) to sample our wines for 3 days non-stop!

Best wishes for a lovely Christmas and Happy New Year.....and if you would like to come and buy some wine direct from the Cellar Door to drink with your Christmas meal I'll be opening up on Saturday 6th December 2-4pm. Please do drop in.

Finally, please can I ask a huge favour? I could really do with some more Reviews of the wines on my website. So if you have a minute or two to spare, please click on the relevant wine under the SHOP or THE WINES headers and you'll see the Reviews Tab. Click on this and you'll see the area to 'Add a Review'. You'll need to add your name and email as the Reviews are checked by us prior to going live on the website to help prevent spam.

Many thanks

Alison

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