

THE MERCY MESSENGER

Monterey County

Winter Shipment, November 2010

Volume I, Issue 4

Harvest 2010: Reflections

It's hard to believe but we've now completed our third vintage at Mercy Vineyards. That said, we have been witness to many more harvests in our varied wine industry experiences (to say how many would be an indictment of our "wise" age), and in that time (okay, 35 years) we've never seen anything quite like twenty-ten. To encapsulate the harvest, we like to say that the "stars moved quickly to align", and now that it is complete we are very excited about what we got!

In the Arroyo Seco growing region, twenty-ten began with lots of rain. In just the first four months of the year the rainfall was greater than the annual regional average (14.22 to 12.91, inches respectively). So it was wet! Luckily the region is attacked daily by howling winds so wet weather in the Arroyo Seco AVA doesn't have the same negative impacts (such as the various molds) that it might if damp conditions persisted.



As we moved into the summer (Ha! What summer), the conditions seemed relatively normal. The morning fogs that begin in May and remain daily occurrences through the middle of summer came like clockwork. What didn't go like clockwork was the fog's persistence in 2010. Like elsewhere in the Golden State, summer never seemed to come and in the Arroyo Seco AVA (the average monthly temperatures for the summer months never exceeded 75°). The cool summer contributed to a very long growing season. The benefit of such long hang-times are great flavor development and elevated levels of natural acidity – good aspects for the wines we like to make.

Finally, a heat spell at the end of September jumpstarted harvest. And, once it started it seemed not to stop. We began by picking Sauvignon Blanc from Zabala Vineyard on Sept. 27 (about four weeks later than we generally pick Sauvignon Blanc). Shortly after that came Pinot Noir, then Chardonnay and finally Syrah. The 2010 harvest ended on Oct. 28, just a month after it began.

To sum up the growing season in the Arroyo Seco AVA goes like this: First, it was wet. Second it was cold. And third, it was done! Which is why we like to say that the "stars moved quickly to align" when talking about the twenty-ten grape growing journey. Of course, if there was one consistency from this harvest to our previous, we received some remarkable fruit from our fabulous vineyard partners: Cedar Lane, Griva and Zabala. Cheers!

In this Shipment: Going Griva!

Just in time for the Holidays the Mercy winter shipment features a first look at the 2009 vintage wines as well as the our first wines made from the renowned Griva's vineyard.

Really good stuff, the 2009 vintage produced wines that are, for the Arroyo Seco a bit more powerful and age-worthy than the norm. Head of the Arroyo Seco Growers advocacy group, Michael Griva is one of the iconic farmers of the appellation. Michael's fruit is much sought after by many of Monterey County's finest wineries. Once we had walked the vineyard, and witnessed Michael's fastidious farming, we wanted to be included!

The Griva family has been farming in the central coast since the 1860s. Located in the heart of the Arroyo Seco (Spanish for "dry river") AVA, the vineyard is planted, literally, on the spill way of the dry riverbed. Driving across the property can be tortuous as you run over about a billion river rocks; of course, the rocky soil stresses the vines, limits yields and lead to intensely flavored fruit.

The Griva Chardonnay is highlighted by its tropical fruit nature. Like all the Mercy chardonnays the wine is richly structured (a result of barrel aging and malolactic fermentation) yet is driven by the fruit and acidity.

Past the lush fruit, it's highly nuanced with mineral notes and orange cream.

As for the Griva Pinot, we were taken by the dark color and depth of flavors. The wine is the progeny of three clones, one of which is a suitcase clone said to be from *La Tache* in Burgundy. Whether true or not, the wine displays upfront cherry aromas with a broad array of spice, earth, floral and brambly berry characters. It is great pinot noir!

We hope you enjoy the wines and the Holidays. Cheers!

Vintners,


Mark Dirickson


Mike Kohne

[Wine technical notes are enclosed]

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Upcoming Events:

December 11, 2010 - *Wine Wonderland*. Join Mercy from noon to 5pm at the Rock Wall Wine Company's winter open house. Located in Alameda, enjoy wines from nine boutique producers., as well as heavy appetizers, live music and much more. Tickets are \$35 per. Visit the Mercy website for more information.

March 4, 2011 - *World of Pinot Noir*. The 7th annual WOPN will be held at the Cliff's Resort in Shell Beach from 3pm to 6pm. Mercy will be poured at the Pinot by the Sea event. For tickets and info visit www.wopn.com.

March 13, 2011 - *The Family Winemakers So Cal Tasting*. Join Mercy and other family owned, boutique wineries in Del Mar (3/13) from 3-6pm for a comprehensive tasting.

(Visit www.mercywines.com for more event s and information)



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ARTISAN WINES FROM THE ARROYO SECO

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The Arroyo Seco AVA

Ultimately products of their origin, the caliber of Mercy wines are all indebted to the Arroyo Seco grape growing region. Literally translated Arroyo Seco means “dry riverbed”, this AVA (American Viticultural Area) has been in existence since 1983. One of the eldest appellations in California it was and is recognized for its many distinct geographic, climatic and soil conditions.

The Arroyo Seco AVA is a unique part of Monterey County's Salinas Valley. It is a dramatic corridor that, from the west, begins in a steep, narrow gorge at the foot of the Santa Lucia mountain range. Moving east, the canyon widens and eventually opens to the Salinas Valley. The drastic variations of topography contribute to a variety of microclimates and soil types, including a surface soil littered with large river rocks (endearingly referred to as “Greenfield Potatoes” or “Dinosaur Eggs” by local farmers).

The AVA unique by itself and pays homage to its location within the greater Monterey County landscape. The effects of the county's “Rain

Shield”, “Blue Grand Canyon” and “Thermal Rainbow” have a big impact on creating an ideal locale for grape growing and ultimately the right attributes for the cultivation of world class Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Syrah.

Semi-arid, the region receives approximately 13 inches of rain per annum. This scant amount of rain is in part due to the fact that, as a north-south oriented valley, the western boundary consists of the Santa Lucia Mountain range which blocks Pacific storms from coming in from the west. The lack of rain contributes to stressful vineyard conditions, which lower yields.

In effect, storms like other marine influences must come down the valley from the north. This climatic condition creates what is referred to as a “Thermal Rainbow” and has a major affect on the AVA during the summer months when fog from the Pacific saturate the region. The “Thermal Rainbow” showcases the notion that the closer to the north-end of the Salinas Valley (aka the Pacific Ocean at Monterey Bay), the cooler the



Monterey County Map - Thermal Rainbow

daily temperatures and slower ripening rate.

Furthering the slow ripening rate and intensity of the cool weather (wind and fog) is the impact of the “Blue Grand Canyon”. This underwater canyon lies just off the coast in Monterey Bay and is in fact of similar scope (depth and length) to the Grand Canyon. The deep waters from this canyon contribute to great cooling and make Monterey County, and in concert the Arroyo Seco AVA, distinct and special.

All of these conditions enhance the unique attributes of the Arroyo Seco AVA and coalesce to produce great wines. The regional vineyards are inherently stressed, and thereby the vines are truly at the Mercy of Mother Nature.