

Spring-Summer 2006

ONE MORE TIME?!

I'm writing this on the 4th day of June and although it is technically still spring it really feels like the 4th day of summer. Our typical summer pattern of early morning fog on the coast and up the valley followed by hours of gorgeous sunshine and cool breezes in the evening seems successfully entrenched.

And not a moment too soon. Just six weeks ago we were still in the grips of the worst winter any of us can recall. We had already received over 70 inches of rain, shattering last year's record of 63 inches, and one state forecaster thought we had another month left of this pattern. Good grief!

I have never seen the vines dormant for such an extended period of time. Last year we had plenty of sun between each storm so the vines got off to a great start, but this year we had grey, cold, rainy days seemingly without end. If it didn't rain it was still dark, cold, and miserable.

So naturally my mind began to ponder the worst-case scenario. What if we simply did not have a harvest this year? This is farming after all; there are no guarantees. Aside from the fact that I thought it would be a shame if our 30th anniversary vintage was a total bust, I thought if we had to experience a completely disastrous vintage we are probably in as good a position to weather it as we have ever been.

A strong case can be made that the five-year period of 2001 through 2005 has produced the five strongest consecutive vintages in our history. 2001 through 2003 I would rate as equal vintages. All three can be considered excellent and each has its' specific strengths and unique characteristics. 2004 and 2005 I am quite sure can be rated as our finest back-to-back vintages in our history. 2004 seems to possess in one vintage a synthesis of the strengths of the three previous years and 2005 is quite frankly beyond description at this point.

Well, mother-nature has provided spectacular weather for the last five weeks and the vine growth has been nothing short of miraculous.

My mind has left behind the contemplation of the disastrous and has moved on to the enjoyment of the present state of glorious vine health, numerous fruit clusters, and the very real possibility of yet another great year! Cheers to summer!

--Michael Keenan