

Fall-Winter 2009-2010

30TH ANNIVERSARY VINTAGE

One of the things that I have realized recently is that I have had to “unlearn” some of the fundamental axiomatic truths about wine that my father instilled in me many years ago. For him great wine was all about intensity, structure, complexity, and the ability to improve through the aging process. This is why Dad only looked for property in the mountains, thinking this setting would better achieve this dynamic than a valley setting. He was absolutely right about Spring Mountain. Grapes grown here are more intense. To further augment intensity watering, like in France, was prohibited. Nothing was done to enhance soil health, this would “spoil” the vines, and to achieve greatness the vines must really struggle! This theory, while sound on paper, ended up producing wines that were a little too intense with tannins that only a father could love.

It took me years to realize it but augmenting intensity was not the way to go. Our appellation does enough of that on its own. Enhancing soil health through sustainable practices such as growing cover crops and applying organic compost is the way to go. And for Gods’ sake if the vines need water let them have a drink! This produces wines with a better tannin texture and a more expressive nature.

But the biggest surprise for me over the last decade has been the relationship between quality and quantity. One of the great axioms in the wine world is that lower yields produce higher quality. While I’m sure this must be true for other appellations this has surprisingly not been so up on the mountain.

2006, our 30th vintage, produced a record Chardonnay yield and a record Merlot yield. Quite frankly we were all a little shocked over the Chardonnay yield and I decided to keep it a state secret until the wine sold out for fear that people would think less of it had they known how much of it there was. But now I feel comfortable enough about these truths to talk about them in real time.

The wine on the cover, the 2006 30th Anniversary Reserve Merlot from the Mailbox Vineyard is simply put the most mouth watering, delicious Merlot that we have ever put in bottle. I’m sipping on a glass right now: the depth of fruit, the spiciness, the big rich velvety texture, oh my- oh my!

Well, here is to thirty years of living and learning on Spring Mountain and feeling our identity forming!

Cheers,

Michael Keenan