

Fall-Winter 2005-2006

AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

We have a truly extraordinary view from our office window at the winery. Our Chardonnay vineyard is right below us and as soon as the vineyard ends the forest begins. A small hill rises up that blocks a view of the valley below but is not high enough to prevent an unobstructed view of the rocky eastern palisades. No houses, no roads in sight. Sometimes I wonder how we get any work done.

At some point last March we were all in the office having a “meeting”. After about ten minutes – which I think should be the limit of any “meeting”– I found myself staring out the window at the natural world. I couldn’t help but blurt out, “Have you guys noticed how green it is outside? I mean, I don’t think I have ever seen the trees look this dark green or the cover crop in the vine rows look this lush and tall.” Fortunately I was not alone in my observations, and this was, I might add, before lunch so no sampling of our fine products had yet occurred to influence our perceptions of the world around us.

So I started to get an inkling that this year, this cycle, might have something extraordinary in store for us. Other signs appeared. The wild flower crop this year was the most brilliant that I remember ever seeing and the bird life seemed more numerous. One day while walking in the cabernet vineyard I saw what I guessed to be about two hundred ravens seemingly “playing” in a big group going from tree to tree and making a tremendous amount of noise. The cover crop was the thickest and most exuberant ever. We are certain of this because we have never had to mow it this many times! And don’t get me started about the fig tree this year. I think that recipe went out in the September wine club shipment and I highly recommend it!

The rainfall this last year was an all-time record; sixty-three inches. And between each storm there was plenty of sun. So the stage was set for a great growing season but each time a vineyard started flowering it started raining again! At one point I thought it would be a miracle if we ended up with any fruit. It even rained on Father’s Day weekend, the day of our open house. Somehow the bees managed to get their job done through all the rain and fruit did begin to form. August was pretty mild and we all looked forward to some good ol’ September heat to bring us home.

The first ten days of September were really cold. There were days that didn’t get over fifty-six degrees. Were my special feelings about this year just the musings of a madman? Would the fruit ever ripen? Were we now in the grips of some new evil global weather pattern? No, yes, and no, respectively. The sun finally came out, the vines responded rapidly and we harvested what may turn out to be a truly extraordinary vintage.

Cheers to the future! —Michael Keenan