

St. Supéry Chronicles

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Inside this issue:

Ahead Of The Curve, Again

Look For The Twin Palms

Fermentation, The Ultimate Mystery

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Harvest '96: Light But Great!

Big headlines of late "Grape Crop Short in '96 ... Tonnage Down In '96 ... '96 Grape Harvest Unfruitful." Here we are in a year when everybody's clamoring for good Napa Valley wine and there just aren't enough grapes to go around. Welcome to the wine business.

There are several reasons why many wineries came up short of grapes: the heavy rains we had this spring interfered with the setting of fruit in early flowering varieties (such as Chardonnay). Then came the hottest August since 1984. And the total producing acreage in the valley is still down as a result of the ongoing replacement of phylloxera-ridden vineyards.

St. Supéry over the past three vintages has been extremely lucky not to be hit by the weather woes others were experiencing. But we got caught in 1996. Among the whites our Chardonnay crop was down a bit, but other white varieties were within normal limits.

As for the reds, shatter and the heat of August left the Cabernet and Merlot crops noticeably smaller than usual. Thanks to the wine gods for our good fortune in 1994 and 1995. We

have more than enough great Cabernet and Merlot to tide us over and keep St. Supéry red fans in good supply.

Perhaps the most unusual, and pleasant, aspect of Harvest '96 was the "breather" we had between the harvest of our whites and reds. Not infrequently, the Napa Valley has late summer hot spells which accelerate the ripening process in all varieties and result in "everything coming in (to the winery) at once." Chaos. Not enough troops. Not enough tank space. Diminishing peace of mind. Bad for the wine. So it's really nice to have a slow week or two in the middle. For whatever reason, our Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc harvest was essentially finished before the reds came in, so for a grape harvest it was quite serene.

All the fruit arrived at the winery in great shape, so it looks like 1996 should be a fine year for quality wines. For most everyone, it was one of those "Quantity Down, Quality Up" sort of years and, this should be a particularly good year for fans of the Saint.

More in our next issue.

The Great Olive Tree Caper



Dale, Bill and rescued olive tree

Good deeds performed by good people all too often go unacknowledged, but not at St. Supéry. We now have a lovely grove of olive trees out by the crush pad, thanks to a harrowing eleventh hour rescue by Dale Motiska of Neon Palm Nursery in Santa Rosa and Bill Lindner, St. Supéry's jack-of-all-trades.

Here's how the tale unfolded: Due to the St. Supéry entrance remodel, the six olive trees growing there had to go. But since olives transplant well, we made arrangements to move them again (they had been

Continued on back page.