

Ceritas

FALL 2010 ISSUE

Dear Friends,

Behind the wines of Ceritas lies an intimate connection between both Phoebe and myself and the earth from which we derive the wine. This bond between “man” and earth invites us both to meditate each year and connect to the source of our wines. We feel that making wine is a deeply human act and should never be relegated to the industrial process nor should the treatment of wine as commodity be as common as it is today.

Our desire from the beginning is to express the geologic kaleidoscope and micro climates put in front of us on the North Coast. When working from a place where a love of terroir is the driving force, it invites us to enjoy the pleasures of working with the soil and rediscovering the capacity to observe and understand plants. We often have to take risks each season but we must believe in our work and the work of Mother Nature. Patience is often rewarded, more so in ways only to be understood in the distant future. It is this nod to a more complex world that drives our work, to be a partner with our surroundings rather than to fight it.

Our work in the winery shares a similar vision. We avoid excess concentration for the sake of veiling the wines origins, over manipulation which more often serves the desires of the winemaker rather than the wine, lack of use of oenological wine products and the abuse of new oak. From the beginning we have made wines that we love, wines that we want to share with others. We are blessed to be connected to some amazing parcels of land and we are excited about offering you our 2008 wines.

VINTAGE 2008

From spring frosts, to shatter, to the lowest recorded crop levels in many years, we were challenged from beginning to end in 2008. Early repeated spring frosts immediately reminded us of the precious balance between us and Mother Nature. It was the coldest spring since 1943. Repeated frosts swept the Sonoma Coast and western edges of Russian River Valley, leaving many shoots frost damaged or dead.

The vines summoned their wild origins to persevere. New shoots emerged only to be set back again by subsequent rounds of cold spells in March. What did survive continued to grow and once out of frost danger we began to see what was really going to make it. Initial observations revealed moderate recovery with lower than average crops but the newly invigorated growth marched on through April. In late May/early

June, we saw decent weather with periodic precipitation and resulting fruit shatter was scattered throughout all of our vineyards. What finally did set looked to be a mere 40-50% of an average year. From here forward, we spent a considerable amount of time preserving and protecting what fruit did set. Summer cooperated with us – daily temperatures were slightly above average through both July and August. September brought typical early fall sunshine allowing the vines to mature without excess heat.

PORTER-BASS CHARDONNAY

We harvested Ceritas' blocks of Chardonnay on September 26. Given the poor spring conditions, yields were down further than we thought. Our total harvest was 0.92 tons!! What we did harvest had amazing balance of fruit, acidity and mineral concentration. Once at the winery, the grapes were whole cluster pressed, settled overnight and transferred to barrel to begin fermentation. Primary fermentations were steady and proceeded until winter weather set in causing a complete shutdown of any activity in the wine. In early spring the wine began to ferment again, finishing up primary early June and malolactic in August 2009. The wine spent another 6 months on its lees until bottling in January 2010.

The small crop coupled with the moderate ripening season produced a wine with great elegance, balanced fruit to acidity and should possess the ability to age for many years to come. The nose is filled with spice, lemon curd, jasmine flowers and saline notes. In the mouth, the wine is powerful. Notes of lemon balm and stone fruits are backed by a backbone of natural acidity keeping the wine hemmed in. The wine finishes long and the depth of concentrated fruit reveals itself without hiding the wine's origins. We feel that the wine will age gracefully for at least 5-8 years. Will it make old bones, time will tell.

ESCARPA PINOT NOIR

This was our second harvest from our monopole vineyard called Escarpa. This was also the first year that Ceritas farmed the vineyard from pruning to harvest allowing us to see a complete growing season. The difficult spring affected equally both Escarpa and Porter-Bass. We harvested 2.1 tons on September 27 under clear blue skies. The clusters were small, berry size was variable but on average smaller than typical

Pinot Noir. As soon as the grapes went to tank we noticed similar aromas to our 2007. Fresh cherries, strong rose petal notes, earth and Christmas cake spice. Both primary fermentation and secondary fermentation proceeded steadily and finished in July 2009. The wine spent another 7 months on fine lees and was bottled in January 2010.

As in the past vintage, wine from Escarpa reveals many different looks while it opens up. Immediately upon opening the wine is closed, especially on the nose with subtle hints of cinnamon and nutmeg, dark cherries, minerality and moist earth. On the pallet, one gets the sense that this is a wine from a unique place. Balanced acidity and tannins frame similar notes found on the nose. Tight and reserved at first, after an hour or two, the wine shows more of its personality. Dark notes become more focused, more red fruits, the tannins and acidity seem to meld into one rather than stay distant from one another. The finish begins to lengthen and the purity of the fruit comes into focus. Early indications from our friends and sommeliers, reveal that the wine has potential to age – some saying 10+ years. The skeptic in me says “I hope so.”

ALLOCATIONS

Lastly, due to the frost damage in early spring 2008, yields were down considerably. As a result, we do not have enough wine to satisfy similar allocations from the past vintages. We encourage you to place your order quickly, the wine will sell out quickly this year. Please stay tuned to your email, we will be sharing some important news in the near future about a new project, visiting our winery and upcoming events. This is the only release you will receive from us in 2010. Phoebe and I thank you for all of your continued support. Be well.

Gratefully,
John Raytek & Phoebe Bass