

LEGENDS OF STAG HOLLOW

As heard through the grapevine...

(November, 2011) Volume 14.1

Contents

Tastings on Three Weekends

Winemaker's Corner—'01 Vendange Selection

New Releases and 2010 Futures

Current Releases and Specials

Vintage Chart '94-'09

Our passion: craft distinct, individual wines that reflect the place of origin using best vineyard practices and minimal winemaking intervention.
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Greetings from the Hollow,

After declaring in our newsletter last year that Vintage 2010 would be remembered by the latest harvest in decades, by its heroic battles with hungry birds, and by grape flavors that were far better than anyone had anticipated, in retrospect it seems we were preparing for a similar but more challenging vintage in 2011. Oh my, time to seriously re-examine just how late pinot noir harvest can be in Oregon.

Last year we considered October 15 to 22 as being exceptionally late; then, Mother Nature jettisons us into uncharted waters with pinot noir harvest commencing this year on October 25 and finishing on November 2--at Tonnelier Vineyard, a slightly cooler site just up slope from Stag Hollow where we purchased a couple tons of grapes. Across the board this year, pinot noir was harvested at record low sugars (21.0-22.0° Brix). Yet the long "hang-time" combined with a drier than average October seemed to coax the grapes into surprisingly good flavors.

Our spin on the 2011 vintage is this: if grapes were grown on a warmer site akin to Stag Hollow's, then the grapes achieved harvest-mature flavors and should develop into solid (old world style) pinot noir. On cooler sites, wine grapes did not fare so well and did not mature sufficiently.

Here's something to ponder: with four of the last five growing seasons showing moderately cool to cool weather (exception 2009), it seems the time has come to re-adjust Oregon's pinot noir in the market identity, so definitively shaped by the warm vintages 1998 and 2000 through 2006. With so many cool vintage wines, is Oregon pinot noir transitioning to a new image?

Thanksgiving-Holiday Season Tastings

Stag Hollow will be open for six tastings during the Thanksgiving holiday season:

Weekend before Thanksgiving
(Private tasting--mailing list customers)
Saturday & Sunday
November 19 & 20
Noon to 4 PM

Weekend after Thanksgiving

(Public tasting)

November 25, 26, & 27

Friday, Saturday, & Sunday

11 AM to 5 PM

First Saturday in December

(Private tasting--mailing list customers)

December 3

Noon to 4 PM

All tastings are \$10

Reimbursed with purchase

\$60 or more per person

Need a map or directions, or other information about Stag Hollow and its wines? **Staghollow.com** is available to help.

At the upcoming tasting events, Stag Hollow will offer tastes and purchases of:

- "Futures" of 2010 *Reserve* and *Vendange Sélection* (yes!) pinot noirs
- New releases: 2009 *Reserve* and *Reserve 777-114* pinot noirs (and pick up of futures purchased last fall and spring)
- Current releases of 2008 pinot noirs; 2009 dolcetto (gold medal winner); 2009 dry muscat (almost sold out); and 2008 *Field Blend* (on sale, last pallet)
- Our library selection - 2001 *Vendange Sélection* pinot noir—an estate favorite

Fresh breads and our gourmet selection of cheeses and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

If you would like to taste the current selection of Stag Hollow wines but are unable to attend the holiday tastings, call or email to make an appointment (information in banner, above) and we will do our best to accommodate your schedule. Please note that Stag Hollow will be closed for appointments from December 19 through January 2. Also, take advantage of on-line holiday offerings and sales through January 15 at **staghollow.com**. Gift mailing is available, too.

Cellar Selection for Holiday Tastings

Winemaker's Corner

We'll ride the time capsule back a decade to 2001 to open one of our favorite wines, the *Vendange Sélection* pinot noir, at the holiday tastings. The 2001 vintage had an intriguing history, indeed, unlike any other vintage to date. It's a story about patience, trusting intuition, and reaffirming that Stag Hollow crafts wines that blossom with bottle age.

Weather in 2001 was ideal for producing outstanding pinot noir. Even so, along the way there was one short weather incident that framed the entire vintage for us.

In August, after a long warm and dry spell, the weather turned cool for a while. No big deal, except suddenly it got very hot. Temperatures rapidly went from the mid-70s to about 100 degrees (F). This extreme shock in temperature stressed grape plants that were already experiencing a long drying period. To survive the temperature spike, grape plants went searching for water and found it readily available in the clusters. What resulted was immediate and complete dehydration of entire grape clusters, as well as, sections of grape clusters; the affected berries turned into dust in a few days. Wow. The damage was limited, thank goodness, to the most stressed vines, and so effects were scattered "here and there".

A larger, looming problem emerged several weeks later: sun-scalded patches of individual berries showed up within clusters, causing uneven ripening. This problem was quite troublesome to deal with.

First, we removed the most sun-scalded clusters, which cut the crop back by about 20-30 percent. Of the grapes remaining on the vines, about 80 percent were gorgeous and in perfect condition, and the other 20 percent had modest sun damage on <10% of the cluster.

At this juncture, we developed a two-stage, cluster-select harvest strategy. For the first stage, only the perfect clusters were harvested (a slow process). Then, about 25 volunteer "grape surgeons" with pruning shears in hand helped us for the second stage. The volunteers meticulously removed all the under ripe berries from each individual cluster as they harvested. During fermentation, each harvest was fermented separately. The quality of the wine from both harvest stages remained high throughout its evolution.

Much later, after bottling, we met up with a temporary but significant new challenge: the vintage yielded more tannin than we've ever experience

before in pinot noir. This caused the wine to be very

closed in for a long time. So, we patiently waited, pacing the floors, for this wine to turn a corner. During our trial tastings, as we aired the wine over days, the 2001 pinot noirs gave us hints that a great wine was hidden behind all the youthful tannins, showing balanced and complex structure and a long finish.

Patience indeed! With the 2001s taking their sweet time, the much heralded and sought-after 2002 pinot noirs arrived on the scene. These pinot noirs were the complete opposite: they developed quite rapidly. The 2002 pinot noirs quickly surpassed the 2001s in maturation, and justifiably were released well before the 2001s. This forced the classic vintage rivalry between wines, wherein the popular and attractive younger sibling comes of age and draws all the attention.

Now relegated to the shadows of the acclaimed 2002s, once again the 2001 vintage didn't stand a chance as the big, muscular, easy drinking 2003s arrived. So the 2001 *Reserve* and *Vendange Sélection* pinot noirs had to quietly wait their turn. Finally by the fourth year the 2001 vintage pinot noirs finally started to hit their stride, and they never lost a beat after that, developing more and more engaging flavors as time went on.

By this point, however, the marketplace had moved on from the 2001 vintage. At Stag Hollow, we were fortunate that the 2001s found some passionate fans, notably Chris and Jack Czarnecki, owners of the Joel Palmer House restaurant in Dayton, Oregon, who served the 2001 pinot noirs to more than 1500 dining guests in 2006 and 2007, and Bruce Graham, Wine Steward at Zupan's Markets, who developed an extensive following for the 2001 Stag Hollow pinots.

We look forward to pouring the 2001 *Vendange Sélection* pinot noir for you at the Thanksgiving season tastings. After 10 years, this wine shows excellent depth, structure, and further aging potential, yet is ready to drink now.

The wine will be available for purchase at \$95, limit one per person.

Santé!

New Releases

Futures Pick-up

Orders of 2009 futures, *Reserve* and *Reserve 777/114* pinot noirs, are currently available for pick up at Stag Hollow's tasting room. If these wines need to be shipped instead, please call or email Stag Hollow to arrange further details.

2009 Pinot Noir

The 2009 vintage pinot noirs are markedly different from other vintages over the past five years. Clearly, 2009 was substantially warmer than the two vintages on either side of it. The 2009's resume of wine characteristics includes big flavors, high extraction, and higher than average alcohol—similar to 2003 and 2006, but clearly different flavor profiles than those years. The 2009s are not quite as massive as 2003 and 2006, show more structure and potential to gain complexity through aging, and are developing more slowly.

For fans of full-bodied Oregon pinot noir with grip, this is your vintage—right on schedule, every third year (in the 2000 decade). Can we expect the 2012 vintage to continue this trend?

Last Thanksgiving, we offered futures of the 2009 *Reserve* and over the Memorial Weekend Tastings we offered the 2009 *Reserve 777/114* (clonal blend) for futures purchase, as well. Both wines are impressive, though they will require further bottle aging to reach their true potential.

Last year we speculated that the 2009 *Reserve* might be tracking most closely to the 2001 *Reserve*, a wine that we noted earlier in the newsletter as needing long bottle-aging to develop its true depth. Even though the 2009 may need bottle aging on par with the 2001, it's too early to predict that 2009 *Reserve* flavor profiles will correspond with the 2001 vintage.

We were surprised at this time last year that our 2009 pinot noir clonal blend, *Reserve 777/114*, was so closed-in, delaying its debut for futures purchase until the 2011 Memorial Weekend tastings. If you missed the unveiling of this wine last May and the futures (best) price for this wine, we have good news.

By holding off the retail store release of this wine until January 2012, we are offering our direct sales customers a second chance to purchase this wine at close to futures pricing and well below the eventual retail price. The pre-retail release price of the 2009 *Reserve 777/114* through January 15, 2012 is \$29.95/btl per case (25% off retail), \$31.95/btl for 6 btl (20% off retail), and individual bottles at \$33.95 each (15% off retail). After January 15, the individual bottle price of the *Reserve 777/114* will be \$39.95/btl with a case discount at 15%.

Both 2009s, the *Reserve* and *Reserve 777/114*, will be available for pick up beginning November 19th. The price of the 2009 *Reserve* is \$39.95/btl and the case price is \$33.95/btl (15% off).

2009 Muscat

Just released earlier this summer, the 2009 (dry) Muscat has been a hit and is almost sold out. Made in an Alsatian style from muscat ottonel and early muscat grapes, this refreshing wine consistently pairs well with spicy foods such as Thai or India cuisine. The 2009

Muscat is priced at \$16.95/btl and \$14.41/btl at the mixed or solo case price.

2010 Pinot Noir Futures

Given how cool the weather was during the 2010 vintage, how late harvest was, and how narrow a time window we had in the third week of October to harvest grapes before the fall rains set in, there might be skepticism about just how good the 2010 vintage is.

We have been skeptical too, especially since the wines developed slowly during barrel aging. With about five weeks before blending barrel lots for our reserve and entry level pinot noirs, the 2010s in a feat of pinot noir magic took a giant leap forward in maturation. During the last two blind tastings of 2010 barrel samples, we were in awe of how much potential this vintage has.

The 2010 pinot noirs are from a cool vintage (meaning that dark, hugely extracted wines are not the norm). Even so, the 2010 Stag Hollow pinot noirs were made from grapes that tasted delicious in the vineyard and had well developed flavor characteristics despite lower than usual sugar levels. The wines show good color, balance, complex flavors, aroma and a long finish. The wines are much closer to a wine from *Cote d'Or*, in style, than most Oregon vintages.

We bottled the 2010s in early October. A few days ago we opened the *Reserve* and *Vendange Sélection* for the first time after bottling. They put a smile on our faces! They are showing well and ready for Thanksgiving futures tastings and sales. After being open for three days, these wines showed even more complexity with floral perfumed noses and complex floral and dark berry flavors, a good indication that the 2010s will gain even more charm and complexity with further bottle aging.

Futures price for Stag Hollow pinot noirs is one of the best wine values in the Valley. The 2010 *Reserve* and *Vendange Sélection* pinot noirs are priced at \$169/6 pk (= \$28.17/btl) and \$299/cs (= \$24.92/btl). Delivering excellent quality-to-value for our Stag Hollow customers, we have not changed our futures case price since the Stag Hollow's 2005 vintage. Prices are good through January 31, 2012.

Please note, these are set prices—no further discounts apply. Wines will be available for pick up or mailing at this time next year.

Current Releases

2008 Pinot Noirs

Two 2008 pinot noirs, the Stag Hollow *Reserve 777/114* and *Yamhill-Carlton* will be available for tasting and purchase at our upcoming tasting events. The *Reserve* pinot noir will be available for purchase as well.

The *Reserve 777/114* pinot noir is crafted only in vintages when pinot noir Dijon clones 777 and 114 reveal exceptional characteristics, warranting a special separate reserve bottling, which the 2008 vintage provided. *Reserve 777/114* has beautiful fruit structure, highlighted by notes of dark cherry and boysenberry, an oak-spiced frame that will add complexity as the wine ages, and the classic long-lingering finish that customers have come to expect of Stag Hollow pinots. The wine will develop with 3 to 5 years further aging or longer. Price of the Stag Hollow *Reserve 777/114* is \$39.95/btl and at the case price \$33.95/btl.

One of the most intriguing wines that we've made in recent memory is the 2008 *Yamhill-Carlton* pinot noir. It continues to evolve, titillating us along the way. The 2008 *Yamhill-Carlton* pinot noir is more about structure and mouth feel than round, pretty fruit that generally characterizes the 2008 vintage. This wine takes a journey where no Stag Hollow pinot has gone before, showing undercurrents of fresh herbs that we find engaging, especially framed in the delicious 2008 fruit. The 2008 *Yamhill-Carlton* pinot noir is definitely worth trying, and is an incredible value in 2008 pinot noir selling at \$24.95/btl (15% off case price is \$21.20/btl).

2009 Dolcetto

The Stag Hollow 2009 Dolcetto is among the best we've made to date with this Italian grape variety, originating from Italy's Piedmont. The 2009 Dolcetto was bestowed a gold medal at the 2011 NW Wine Summit, the third wine vintage in a row that we our Dolcetto earned a gold medal ('06, '08, '09; Dolcetto was not produced in 2007). The 2008 Stag Hollow Dolcetto sold out just before Thanksgiving last year, prompting the '09 Dolcetto to be moved into the limelight only a few weeks after bottling. Since then, the 2009 Dolcetto has matured into a rich and deliciously forward wine. Nearly everyone who has visited the Stag Hollow tasting room over the past six months has purchased this Dolcetto!

Our estate-grown '09 Dolcetto shows mouth-watering red fruits framed in a big structure with a spicy tang on the finish. It accompanies a wide range of foods, especially Italian cuisine. The '09 Dolcetto is \$18.95/btl and \$16.11/btl in mixed or solo case.

2008 Field Blend (on sale, last pallet)

To make room for the largest volume of *Field Blend* ever as the 2009 vintage is released later this winter, the remaining inventory of 2008 *Field Blend* is on sale at a special price of \$9.95/btl and at case price at \$7.75/btl (nearly 30% off regular retail). Call us soon with your order for pick up during our Thanksgiving tastings. *Field Blend* orders will be reserved for pre-pay customers only.

The '08 is a proprietary blend of pinot noir, dolcetto and a modest amount of lemlberger, an Austrian/German variety, and includes chardonnay fermented with skins of red grapes. For us, the '08 has developed appealing complexity through bottling aging over the last year. For

everyday consumption, the *Field Blend* offers excellent quality for the price. To keep the price so low, we sell the *Field Blend* only at Stag Hollow. It's not available at retail stores.

On Saturday and Sunday, November 19 and 20, we will provide sneak-preview tastings and sales of the 2009 *Field Blend*. Our string of great values in everyday "country" wine lives on with the 2009! The '09 *Field Blend* retails for \$10.95/btl; at the case the price is \$8.76/btl (20% off).

**2011 Vintage Chart
Pinot Noir '94-'09**

Vintage	Wine	Drink Range	[plateau]
1994	Celebré	now & beyond	—still going
1995	Vendange Sélect.	now	
1998	Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond	
1999	Vendange Sélect.	now	
2000	Vendange Sélect.	now to 2014	[now]
2001	Vendange Sélect.	now to 2013	[08-11]
2002	Vendange Sélect.	now to 2013	[now]
2004	Vendange Sélect.	now to 2016	[2010-14]
2005	Vendange Sélect.	now to 2013	[2009-12]
2006	Vendange Sélect.	now to 2015	[2010-13]
2000	Reserve	now	
2001	Reserve	now	
2002	Reserve	now	[2007-10]
2004	Reserve	now to 2014	[2010-12]
2005	Reserve	now to 2012	[08-11]
2006	Reserve	now to 2012	[10-11]
2008	Reserve	2013 to 2017	[14-16]
2009	Reserve	2013 to 2018	[14-16]
2004	Reserve-777/114	now to 2013	[2010]
2005	Reserve-777/114	now to 2012	[2008-11]
2008	Reserve 777/114	now to 2015	[2012-13]
2009	Reserve 777/114	2012 to 2016	[2013-15]
2001	Cuvée	now	(delicious)
2003	Cuvée	now	
2002	Yamhill County	now	
2003	Yamhill-Carlton	now	
2004	Yamhill-Carlton	now	
2005	Yamhill-Carlton	now	
2006	Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2013	[2011]
2007	Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2015	[20011-14]
2008	Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2014	[20011-15]

[Underlining signifies change since the previous Vintage Chart. Now refers to drinking well now. Plateau refers to the most satisfying time period (in our opinion) to consume the wine. Production of "Reserve" designation began in 2000. Wines that should have been consumed by now are not listed]

Cheers, Jill and Mark

