

LEGENDS OF STAG HOLLOW

As heard through the grapevine...

(November, 2020) Volume 23.4

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Connecting with Stag Hollow

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*Open for public tastings Thanksgiving, and
Memorial Day Weekends*

*Open for private tastings by appointment
(closed for tastings during pandemics)*

Greetings friends of Stag Hollow,

We hope you and your family are safe and well. With being closed for tastings during the traditional Thanksgiving holiday tastings, we will miss seeing you and exchanging stories. Much thanks to everyone who has ordered wine from us during these harrowing times.

The last red wine to complete fermentation in the ten-month journey from vine pruning through harvest season is a milestone worth celebrating. Given the hurdles to reach this 2020 milestone, we were eager to celebrate with a dinner out(side) at a nearby restaurant on the last day of daylight savings, October 31.

With an outdoor reservation for 5 PM, temperatures hovering at 60 degrees and dropping as the sun dipped to the horizon, we dressed in layers for dining in camping-like conditions. As we approached the restaurant it seemed odd a closed sign was dangling in the window, though staff quickly opened the locked door. A nervous masked man in black pants and white shirt peered out at us revealing they were closed. The restaurant staff just found out an employee tested positive for the "virus." Hmm, not good. How about take-out of tapas and a *grand reserva* Tempranillo at home, instead? Yum. Celebratory? It wasn't quite what we had hoped, but life's entertainment expectations have been lowered considerably since March.

This experience solidified an agonizing decision that we have been wrestling with for many weeks, that is to forgo holiday season wine tastings at Stag Hollow for safety reasons. Fast forward two weeks as we finalize this newsletter the announcement is made by Oregon's Governor that all Oregon wine tastings are on hold until at least December 2. And with a blink of an eye, festive Thanksgiving tastings ceased to exist for all wineries and wine lovers. Meanwhile, tasting rooms can continue to provide pickup of pre-ordered wine.

Free Shipping--States Listed

We continue to offer complimentary free shipping of new wine orders of 6 bottles or more to the following western states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington State, and Wyoming. We also provide free shipping of new wine orders of 12 bottles or more to Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington DC, and Wisconsin. Shipping to Alaska and Hawaii is 50% off. All other states present too many barriers for us to ship. Bummer.

Not Home to Receive Shipments?

If you pass up having wine shipped because it's too challenging to receive packages at home that require a signature, ship to a FedEx mail store where you can pick up wine shipments at your convenience. These stores are conveniently located throughout every urban and suburban area. The shipping location can be listed when ordering either online at www.staghollow.com, calling 503-662-5609 for assistance, or contacting us by email: sales@staghollow.com.

Tasting Room Pick-up of Pre-Ordered Wine

We continue to provide tasting-room-door pickup of pre-ordered wine, with physical distancing and safety guidelines followed. See page 4 of the newsletter for our wine price list.

Reflections on the Memorable 2020 Vintage

Terrific news: Stag Hollow wines from the 2020 vintage are showing very well among all varieties. In tasting the juice and fermenting must, smoke effects have not been detected from the fires that erupted in Oregon after Labor Day. Wineries in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA have tested grape juice and wine for smoke effects. The results so far indicate wines are under perceptible thresholds. It's beginning to look like smoke was diluted enough in our area to not impact the grapes and wines. However, time will tell. We'll be testing our wines later this winter.

Vintage 2020 climate goes down in the books as warm and quite dry. Temperatures in general were lower compared to our recent stretch of hotter years from 2014 to 2018. Temperatures in 2020 reached 90 degrees or higher on 16 days, exceeding the long-term average of 12 days but well below 30 days in 2018. Thankfully, only one 100-degree day occurred in 2020! More important was the lack of rainfall during the water year (October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020) with 9 of 12 months receiving below normal precipitation. This prolonged drought stressed our dryland-grown vines as grape harvest approached. As luck would have it, the vintage came together well with some timely rains before harvest.

Pruning 2020 season began with the warmest January since 1953; even so, precipitation occurred nearly every day pushing rainfall well above the monthly average. February was dry, less than half of normal; in retrospect, this was a harbinger of things to come. After below normal precipitation in March, April turned even drier, the driest April in more than 50 years, totaling less than an inch. Temperatures in February through mid-April also were cooler than normal, but, surprisingly bud break of pinot noir occurred at the usual time, April 10-15.

Temperatures in May see-sawed from unusually hot, with six days in the mid 80s to 90 degrees, to mostly below normal. Precipitation in May and June swung back to normal before pivoting to a very dry summer that set the stage for September's conflagrations.

September began with an unusual heat wave. Six of the first seven days were over 90 degrees, reaching as high as 99, which pushed grape sugar levels well ahead of flavor development. This was worrisome. On the 7th, Labor Day, a monumental thermal gradient formed between the northern Rocky and Cascade Mountains that hurled hot and very dry winds into western Oregon with gusts up to 60 miles per hour causing huge fires to race out-of-control from Washington State to northern California. Smoke blanketed skies for the next 10 days like a very dark fog, lowering daytime temperatures 15 to 20 degrees. Then, on September 17th a storm swept the murky air away. The prolonged obstruction of sunlight and cooler temperatures slowed the pace of grape ripening. Temperatures continued to remain below normal through September 25th as ~1.5 inches of welcomed rain fell on our parched grape vines. Now revived, Pinot Noir and Tempranillo reached optimum flavor profiles with three additional days in the 80s. Harvest began on October 2nd thru the 6th when temperatures shifted to crisp, cool mornings and daytime highs of 68 to 75 degrees. Perfect. Conditions remained dry until October 10 for us to harvest Dolcetto before Oregon's rainy season took hold.

What Next?

With wine tastings cancelled over Memorial Day Weekend and now likewise for Thanksgiving weekend, we ponder where to go from here. The two most important in-person tasting events vanished. Also how do we show our newly release wines and futures? Complicated as it is, we're adapting and evolving with the situation. We've formulated a plan to take the place of wine tastings during the pandemic that we call TryMe. These are one-time purchases of single bottles from our current inventory for which the TryMe purchases are discounted by 40% off the regular bottle price. We reasoned that a TryMe purchase will give Stag Hollow customers a way to taste new wines and to re-taste other wines at about half the regular cost, and bring some holiday cheer. TryMe wine purchases are limited to one bottle of any wine currently available that you haven't purchased in the last 2 years or purchased on futures in the last 4 years (Jill keeps excellent purchase inventory records, as many of you know).

To taste wines for futures purchase, we are preparing a supplemental bottling of "futures" wines in 187 ml (6.3 oz) champagne bottles that will be sealed with a crown cap similar to artisan beer bottles. At 1/4 the volume of a regular 750 ml bottle, these hard to find yet charming little bottles are identical to the bottle size of wines sold on airline flights.

2019 Futures

For the November-December holiday season, we are offering a limited-bottling of 2019 Tempranillo and 2019 Pinot Noir Reserve in our new 187 ml (~tasting) size bottles. The prices are \$8 and \$10 for the Tempranillo and Pinot Noir, respectively. Quantities are limited to one bottle of each wine per customer. As this newsletter is being printed, the 187 ml bottles have been shipped to us but have not arrived. We are targeting to have these wines bottled and labeled by November 25, if everything falls into place.

In 2019, Mother Nature delivered a different vintage than we experienced from 2014 to 2018. After a not-too-hot, not-too-cold growing season for most of 2019, temperatures turned much colder on September 7. For the next five weeks temperatures struggled to reach 70 degrees; this substantially slowed grape ripening and pushed harvest into October. The cool weather near harvest combined with rains in mid-September nudged the style of the 2019 vintage to be more like Burgundy and Oregon of yesteryear, before modern-day climate change. Stag Hollow's Pinot Noirs from 2019 show a classic "old-world" character of complexity and depth on a medium-bodied frame with perceptible and well-balanced acidity. Likewise for Tempranillo. Our 2019 is reminiscent of cooler regions where Tempranillo is grown in Spain, like Rioja Alta. After so many recent bold, full-bodied vintages, we are feeling euphoric about this vintage adding some style diversity for our customers.

2018 Futures Available for Pick up or Shipping

Label printing is backlogged, yet another consequence of humanity's social predicament. Our labels for 2018 wines are in the queue to be printed and shipped very soon. We're hoping to label by November 25 and futures orders of our 2018 Pinot Noirs: Reserve, Reserve 777/114, and Vendange Sélection will be ready for pick-up by appointment beginning November 27. We will post on Stag Hollow's website and Facebook page when these wines are available for pick up and shipping. Shipping costs are additional for futures purchases.

From one of the hottest vintages on record, the 2018 wines are massive Pinot Noirs. We found the 2018s reasonably approachable during the first 16 months of development considering the heft of these wines. However, since then the 2018s have pulled back and are much more closed, clearly indicating additional cellaring is required. We've experienced this before. For perspective, the 2015 pinots from a correspondingly hot vintage, also with substantial structure, were closed for several years and are now are just starting to re-emerge as quite engaging wines. After more than 25 vintages, history has shown our reserve level wines typically benefit by aging at least five years before uncorking.

New and Recent Releases

2016 Field Blend

Our 2016 and 2015 *Field Blends* are very different wines in style and flavor characteristics, which is driven primarily by vintage but also by blending. Our newest release, the 2016, is 61% Dolcetto, 22% Pinot Noir, and 17% Tempranillo and is smooth from start to finish with ample fruit-driven structure: it's delicious! The 2015 is a blend of Pinot Noir 40%, Dolcetto 30%, Syrah (southern Oregon) 20% and Tempranillo 10% that is a bigger, bolder wine than the 2016 and is true to the style of the very warm 2015 vintage. Both wines are among the best *Field Blends* we've made to date and offer remarkable value in depth and complexity for everyday drinking.

2016 Dolcetto d'Yamhill

Our 2016 *Dolcetto d'Yamhill* debuted in May when the tasting room was closed, and consequently this superb Dolcetto has missed the recognition that the 2015 *Dolcetto d'Yamhill Superiore* received. Like the *Field Blends*, vintage is piloting the differences between the two Dolcettos: the 2015 is big and rustic in character; the 2016 smooth, fruit-driven that is a match for the best Italian Dolcettos from the Alba growing region in Italy's Piedmont. The 2016, a winemaker favorite, has astonishing depth and richness for a wine at 12.9% alcohol.

2017 Dry Muscat

The 2017 Dry Muscat also debuted in May with nobody to taste it. Wow, do we like this wine! It's a regular wine at our dining table and is one of our finest Alsatian-styled Muscats to date. Do give it a try.

TryMe Case

Stuck at home for the holidays? Need to bring some entertainment into your lives for the holiday season? Why not fill up a case of wines from our TryMe 40% off special? This could be fun.

A scenario for you: *We should ensure there is good mix of older and more recent wines. Let's try to remember what we purchased in the last two years. Those wines need to be excluded. And let's imagine selecting this case to be reminiscent of a visit to Stag Hollow's tasting room.*

The holidays would be a good time to re-taste the 2018 Dolcetto Rosato, which we haven't purchased before. It's a hearty rose-style that is suited for Northwest winters. Let's try those Dolcettos, too; they were quite good. Nice way to break out of the tradition of buying pinot all the time. The 2009 Pinot Noir Reserve is on sale at a remarkable price. We really need to try this well-aged pinot given the amazing price. Whoa, with the TryMe case we could include a vertical of reserves from 2008 to 2012, plus 2014 and 2015 because any of these wines were purchased on futures more than 4 years ago. Oh my, what about sneaking in some of those older Vendanges. Sweet. And let's not forget to leave one slot in our case for the 187 ml bottles of 2019 Tempranillo and Pinot Noir Reserve futures.

So many choices of terrific wines. Enjoy the holidays.

2020 Vintage Chart

Among the updates to the 2020 Vintage Chart, the 2018 pinots have been the most challenging to judge the optimal time to consume. Given the immense structure of these wines this is not surprising and thus we added some question marks for these wines in the chart. We recommend laying the 2018s away for a few years as we continue to provide periodic updates on their development. Same for 2017s. The 2017 vintage has more tannin structure than 2018 or 2016, which points towards long aging. This is another vintage that will require some patience.

One vintage that we have been waiting to turn the corner is 2015. We have good news: the 2015 wines are finally ready to drink and definitely have been worth the wait: the 2015 *Reserve* and *Vendange Sélection* are terrific! Likewise, for the 2016 pinots, which are among of the more accessible Pinot Noirs in recent memory. The smooth complexity of the 2016s makes these wines hard to hold onto near term. The 2014 vintage also has long aging potential. Even though the 2014 *Reserve*, *Reserve 777-114*, and *Vendange Sélection* would benefit from additional aging, these wines are ready. We recommended uncorking 1 to 2 of the 2014s per year over the next several years.

Going further back in time, we tasted all wines listed on the vintage chart except the 1994. All the wines from these vintages were solid and quite pleasurable. If you are holding onto any 2004s or 2006s, these warm vintage wines should be consumed this year to ensure that you enjoy them before age catches up with them.

What have we been consuming most often from our cellar? Pinots from the cooler vintages, 2010 and 2011; these medium-bodied wines are deceptively complex considering their restrained structure. Our pinots from these two vintages are tasting remarkably well (especially 2010 *Reserve*), and perhaps are peaking. After being removed last year, the 2010 *Vendange Sélection* has been added back to the Vintage Chart because we've had so many gratifying bottles of this wine. Please note the quality of the corks that were sold to us for the 2010 vintage have caused more than its fair share wine taint, so there can be an occasional bottle with musty character. If you encounter this problem, we will replace the wines with much apologies. In 2021, we will begin tracking Tempranillo in the Vintage Chart now that we completed our seventh vintage.

2020 Vintage Chart--Pinot Noir 1994-2018

Vintage Wine	Drink Range [plateau]
1994 Celebré	now & beyond—still going
1998 Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond (delicious)
1999 Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond (delicious)
2000 Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond (stunning)
2001 Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond
2002 Vendange Sélect.	now & beyond
2004 Vendange Sélect.	now
2005 Vendange Sélect.	now to 2024
2006 Vendange Sélect.	now
<u>2010 Vendange Sélect.</u>	<u>now</u>
2011 Vendange Sélect.	now to 2021
2012 Vendange Sélect.	now to <u>2024</u>
2014 Vendange Sélect.	<u>now</u> to 2027
2015 Vendange Sélect.	<u>now</u> to 2028
2016 Vendange Sélect.	<u>now</u> to 2026
2017 Vendange Sélect.	2022 to 2028
<u>2018 Vendange Sélect.</u>	<u>2024 (?) to >2030 (?)</u>
2000 Reserve	now
2001 Reserve	now & beyond
2002 Reserve	now
2004 Reserve	now
2005 Reserve	now
2006 Reserve	now
2008 Reserve	now to 2023
2009 Reserve	now to 2022
2010 Reserve	now
2011 Reserve	now to 2023
2012 Reserve	now to 2024
2014 Reserve	now to 2026
2015 Reserve	<u>now</u> to 2026
2016 Reserve	<u>now</u> to 2028
2017 Reserve	2022 to 2028
<u>2018 Reserve</u>	<u>2024 (?) to >2030 (?)</u>
2004 Reserve-777/114	now
2005 Reserve-777/114	now
2008 Reserve 777/114	now to <u>2022</u>
2009 Reserve 777/114	now to <u>2020</u>
2014 Reserve 777/114	now to 2024
<u>2018 Reserve 777/114</u>	<u>2024 (?) to >2030 (?)</u>
2011 Yamhill-Carlton	now
2012 Yamhill-Carlton	now
2014 Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2026 [2019-24]
2015 Yamhill-Carlton	now to 2026

[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