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~Minimally handled using gravity~

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YAMHILL, OR, September 17th, 2010

It's all about the end of September and the beginning of October! It seems like most years I can never call a vintage until the last couple of weeks. This year is no different. If we get early sustained rain, this will be one of the leanest vintages in Oregon's history. If the rain holds off until the end of October, it may be one of my favorite vintages at Lenné.

After one of the coolest vintages in Oregon's brief history, many winemakers and growers are nervously anticipating the 2010 vintage. Cooler sites may never fully achieve ripeness this year and it could mean a very lean year for many Oregon producers. The last vintage with even cooler weather was in 1999. I remember the vintage well because I spent the last week of September and the first of October touring Tuscany. When I returned I debated on making homemade wine from a vineyard called Doe Ridge. When I returned from Italy during the first week in October it poured rain and I thought why bother. Then the wine gods took pity on Oregon vintners and the weather turned. Several glorious weeks of warm, sunny weather saved the vintage and created one of the most ageable vintages Oregon has ever seen.

So we will just have to wait and see, but I can tell you that I prefer cooler vintages. In warmer vintages we fight rising sugar levels and never seem to get the nuances that are achieved in cooler vintages. And in rare years, everything comes together to produce perfectly balanced wine, full of flavor and capable of standing the test of time to reach greatness. That describes the 2008 vintage.

I believe this is the single greatest vintage I have seen in Oregon. The cool dry weather was only part of the story in 2008. The vines set very small, thick skinned berries in 2008. The ensuing cool weather allowed those berries to completely mature without having to worry about rising sugar levels. The results are wines with moderate alcohol levels, loads of very fine tannins, intense underlying fruit and perfect mouthwatering acidity. In essence, perfect wines.

The 2008 wines are not huge wines, but very complex wines and will reward those who have patience. I think this vintage will produce the most complex and longest lived wines in Oregon's history. I would recommend getting them while you can as the critical press is just starting to build. A vintage like this only comes around once or twice in a lifetime.