



Handcrafted

Single Site

Pinot Noir

Notes from the Back Deck

Yamhill, October 7th, 2021

In last year's newsletter I wrote the following and it is appropriate to revisit what I said:

We finished harvest in early October and what a year! We saw wet weather around bloom in early June, the most critical time of the year which determines fruit set. The wet weather and lack of heat at that time resulted in one of the worst fruit sets the Northern Willamette Valley has seen since 2010. In a normal year we would set around 36 tons of fruit at Lenné and we saw half of that this year.

If that wasn't enough, September fires on the eastern side of the valley produced a blanket of smoke which covered the Willamette valley for just over a week. Many producers scrambled to get grapes tested to determine the amount of taint in their fruit with the thought of not picking at all if the levels were too high. Ironically, the main lab that tests for smoke taint is in the Napa Valley and had to be evacuated leaving many local producers guessing at the level of taint. Some producers who got their grapes in early decided not to pick and two major grape buyers in Oregon cancelled all their Willamette Valley grape contracts.

The smoke cleared and we harvested under clear skies. It is too early to tell how much smoke taint are in the wines as it becomes most noticeable after the wines come out of primary and secondary fermentation. We hope we escaped the worst but time will tell. So far we don't detect any taint in the Chardonnay but the Pinot is still up in the air since the taint is on the skins and Pinot sits with the skins during primary fermentation. There is a real possibility that we may not make any single clone wines, South Slope or Kill Hill from the 2020 vintage but we will have a better idea by the end of December.

Indeed, we do have smoke taint and have decided to "declassify" the 2020 vintage and make only a small amount of Lenné Estate and LeNez Pinot Noir. We are also lowering the price because of the taint. Some of you may not even detect it and will enjoy these lush wines, in fact maybe the most drinkable young wines we have ever produced in terms of texture. The extremely low yields produced opulent, velvety wines but there is an added aromatic from the smoke and yet they are hard to resist.

We don't recommend aging these wines as you would normally and we have used a different closure as well. There is some thought that taint becomes more obvious with bottle age so we are recommending you drink these wines in the next six years. They will offer a lot of pleasure for most of you and some of you may not like the smoke which comes off as a black pepper aroma. Regardless, this will be a vintage and time we will never forget.

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But as always, I prefer you email me directly if you have any questions or concerns at steve@lenneestate.com

