

# PRESTON FARM & WINERY

## Climate Change

I often ponder the meaning of climate change for Susan and me here in Dry Creek Valley, for friends and neighbors in Healdsburg, family members in the region, and our community. It's a mouthful and a mindful notion for sure, something we used to joke about—Dry Creek Desert with camels and palm trees—but the uncertainty of climate and the inevitable resultant chaos is no joke. Just in our time here—the past 50 years—we have gone from surrounding creeks overflowing into the vineyards and former prune orchards to the necessity of grazing sheep among the grape vines because there had been no winter rains for the pastures.

There was the time when we first settled here—almost 50 years ago now—that all the local creeks over-topped their banks and flooded into our then prune orchards and a little bitty Cabernet vineyard that came to us with the property. I must admit I was excited, it was like a snow day in the mountains when they closed all the schools and we headed for the slopes. When you're young all that power and energy of water unleashed is mind blowing, it taps into something primal and sexual, definitely intoxicating which was seemly for our newly adopted wine industry.

Flood tales: I've told you of the wayward toilet that floated its way into the vineyard one year. What I haven't confessed is my equally wayward chivalry that prompted me to rescue our then lady bookkeeper piggyback style through the mud. Compressing time a bit there was the flooded Safeway parking lot hosting kayakers likely toasting with coffee from the nearby Starbucks. And armed with government prognostications of the 100-year floodplain we boosted the foundations of our new winery by another 3 feet just in case (which has since been exceeded several times).

Fast forward some decades: The local creeks dry up in April now instead of June; Lake Mendocino dam on the Russian River is all but empty, prompting the State Water Agency to curtail most irrigation projects along the river. Almost the same for Warm Springs Dam on Dry Creek, no pumping unless you have historic riparian rights. Landscaping in town has homeowners schlepping 200 gallon totes of non-potable water from heaven knows where cause the heavens aren't doing it. When I was a young winemaker we used to talk of "things that go pump in the night" referring to the unauthorized addition of water to fermenting grape must (did I do that? Nahh). Now the night pumping is probably for your favorite roses in the front yard.

It's not just about water of course. When day-time temperatures exceed 100 degrees the vines shut down, over 105 the fruit caramelizes, over 110 the leaf canopy fails. And through all of it the workforce suffers. The men and women who work the land and pick the crop and tend the wine are our heroes; but the sun shining down shows no latitude for them. An interesting sociological change I have noted is the different reaction of ethnic groups to climate. Our friends from south of the border who are accustomed to intense sunshine always cover up: hoodies in the heat. The northern folk who grew up baring it all around a swimming pool are beginning to transition from baseball caps to large straw head-coverings with neck protection and long-sleeve shirts. Me? 50 years ago I boldly went forth on the tractor, hatless, shirtless and senseless. My dermatologist loves me.

I am thinking the biggest change affecting us here and everywhere is uncertainty. The farmers and neighbors Susan and I got to know here in Healdsburg and Dry Creek Valley had a life's rhythm based on the predictability of the seasons and the stability of resources. I have written many times of the year's cycle of tasks and commitments: pruning trees and vines in the winter, training the growing plants in the spring to the shape and crop production desired, cultivating the soil in spring and early summer, spraying insecticides (gasp) during the growing season but not too much cause you couldn't afford it, irrigating from the local creek when needed and then picking and delivering the crop to the local co-op or corporate buyer. Then you would go off to your cabin up north or ocean-side getaway for deer hunting or abalone gathering before putting the farm away for the winter.

It was a simple life but satisfying, everyone had the same tasks and challenges and there was a lot of boastful kibitzing and friendly commiserating. If you needed a tool or advice or sympathy your neighbor whom you had known since high school would help you out. Food was often produced at home and as the saying goes during zucchini season you had to lock your door if you didn't want to be inundated. Everyone seemed to have a specialty to share: the grape grower across the valley who made home Zinfandel, the retired butcher down the road who pressed salted prosciutto with the weight of his pickup truck. Everyone had oranges and lemons in the winter, the excess spilling onto the road. Sharing.

So now cut all that loose. Your classmates from high school aren't your neighbors any more. The crops you have all grown for generations may not be the right ones now because they're ripening too early and there isn't enough irrigation water to sustain them. The farm help that used to be available—students from the Ag class and Future Farmers club, Mexican workers from the seasonal government-sponsored migrant program, going further back to the Steinbeckian pre-war period of labor colonialism. That's all long gone and with it the comfort and predictability of having been there before.

But along with uncertainty comes flexibility and creativity. If you aren't constrained by long instilled habits you can look to your imaginative side, try the untested, look outside the box. Survival is a powerful motivator to set aside complacency. We have a useful foundation in our history and in our culture, and we can reach out from that and explore what's next.

Climate change is an awful challenge but there's a bright side. People are coming together to figure it out in a way that I haven't seen since the old farmer line-up at the Sunsweet Prune unloading dock. The talk isn't any more of price and production, but of what can we do to raise crops with less water, or how can we attract a quality labor force, or what can we do to protect our soils. There is a resurgence of the mindset that climate change is a problem that we can figure out together. That there is a way.

If you follow wines you know there are a lot of new varieties being grown in traditional vineyard areas. Here at Preston we have been experimenting with grapes like Ribola Giala, Vermentino, Nero d'Avola. We're all looking for varieties that may be unproven here but that have a track record in warmer climates. And with the familiar traditional grapes we are looking at different ripening scenarios to protect their delicacy and distinction in our hotter summers. At the same time we are looking for ways that we can steward healthy soils with less water. On the table are no-till systems and carbon sequestering cover crops, on the clipboard there is consideration of more and different perennial food crops that will protect the soil biome by preserving existing root structures.

And the people. Here in our fancy town of Healdsburg we feel the pinch, restaurants closing because they can't get workers, farm families no longer cultivating the next generation, service and trades people retiring—try to find a tractor repair mechanic in short order. But there is a new light shining. We are seeing a blossoming of interest among youth looking to nature to find meaning. We hire motivated interns from local high schools for work days on the farm to earn community credit. The LandPaths summer camp program that we host for pre-teens has been oversubscribed for its joyous interaction with the land. And think of how many college major fields of study now have the word "Ecology" in the title.

So, while we moan and complain in a farmerly fashion about the daily difficulties of a changing world, we also sense and share an increasing interest in farming as a means of self expression rather than just a stack of chores. There is an increasing awareness among young people today that working with the land can be a meaningful contribution to society as well as personal fulfillment. With the questions and challenges will come answers and solutions, and that it is how we will learn to deal with climate change.

-Lou

# PRESTON FARM & WINERY



## 2021 Madam Preston

Dry Creek Valley  
Organically Grown  
Estate-Bottled

56% Viognier, 20% Roussanne,  
17% Marsanne, 7% Grenache Blanc  
13.8 % Alcohol  
TA: 5.8 g/L  
pH: 3.6  
Bottling date: 8/16/22  
Release date: 9/22/22

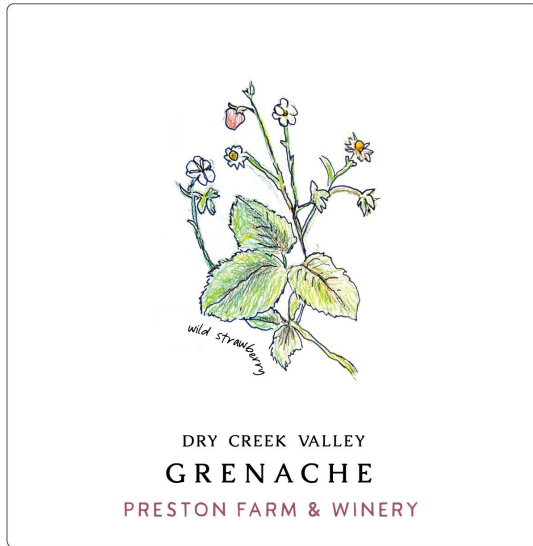
## Winemaker Notes

A blend of the four white Rhone grapes we grow on the Estate, fermented separately and blended one month before bottling. The wine typically leads with the floral aromatics and stone-fruit flavors of Viognier, complemented by mineral and honey notes from a healthy dose of Marsanne, and supported by Roussanne's rich structure and Grenache Blanc's heartiness. In 2021 Grenache Blanc was fermented in a stainless steel tank; the remaining 93% of the wine fermented in french oak barrels (<10% new) with full malolactic fermentation.

2021 produced beautifully balanced wines, with slower ripening than surrounding years and excellent retention of acidity. This year's Madam offers a generous nose of candied orange peel, honeysuckle, melon rind, and dulce de leche. On the palate it is rich and round but not too weighty, with flavors of nectarine, clementine and a saline, umami-like note likely contributed by Marsanne. Zesty, balanced and alive on the finish, showcasing the persistent, seamless acidity of the vintage. -GH

Grapes are certified organic (CCOF). Fermentation is initiated spontaneously without the addition of commercial yeast or malolactic bacteria.

# PRESTON FARM & WINERY



2019 Grenache  
Dry Creek Valley  
Organically Grown  
Estate-Bottled

96% Grenache, 4% Mourvedre  
13.8% Alcohol  
TA: 5.0 g/L  
pH: 3.78  
Bottling date: 8/15/21  
Release date: 9/15/22

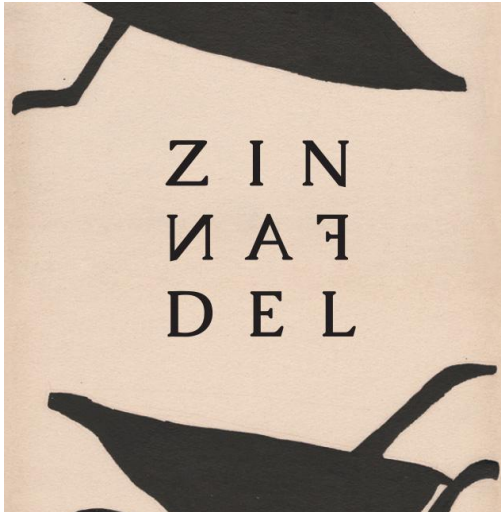
## Winemaker Notes

We have two blocks of Grenache on the Estate: the first planted in 1980 that produces a darker, fleshier wine, and one planted in the late 1990s which makes a lively, aromatic wine with a lighter body. We typically pick these blocks about a week apart, and ferment them in open top tanks for anywhere from 10 to 30 days – a longer maceration can often help tame Grenache’s aggressive tannin. In the southern Rhone tradition, a bin of Mourvedre is occasionally added for a co-fermentation, and the older block sees the inclusion of about 50% whole clusters in its fermentation. In 2019 the blending of these two lots together was a fun, easy job – the vintage produced lively, balanced wines with loads of character.

A heady and generous nose offers aromas of strawberry shortcake, potpourri, and madagascar vanilla, with a background of sweet baking spices. The fruit turns more wild in the mouth, with high-toned wild strawberries, just-ripe raspberry and notes of anise and licorice. The wine finishes with a joyous synergy of acidity and sweet tannin that’s unique to Grenache from a great vintage. -GH

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# PRESTON FARM & WINERY



## 2020 Zinfandel

Dry Creek Valley  
Organically Grown  
Estate-Bottled

88% Zinfandel, 12% Mataro  
14.6% Alcohol  
TA: 5.8 g/L  
pH: 3.64  
Bottling date: 5/2/22  
Release date: 9/15/22

## Winemaker Notes

The Vintage: 2020 was a profoundly challenging year for everyone across Northern California as multiple wildfires began in late August. Fortunately, we were able to harvest a significant portion of our Zinfandel before it was negatively affected by smoke.

Tasting notes: Darker in both color and fruit profile than recent vintages, the 2020 Zinfandel leads with aromas of blackberry compote, raspberry liqueur, and dried tobacco. In the mouth, a healthy dose of Mataro (Mourvedre) adds impressive length to the mid-palate, with flavors of ripe red raspberry, dark cherry, and cocoa powder. The wine brightens on the finish, with a note of blood orange complementing the plush Zinfandel tannins. GH

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**Preston Wine Club Discounts:**

10% Less than 6 Bottles

25% Off Half Case

30% Off Full Case or More



**Preston Wine Club  
Price List  
October 2022**

<b>White Wines</b>	<b>Regular Bottle Price</b>	<b>Case With Club</b>	<b>Discount</b>
2021 Sauvignon Blanc	\$30.00	\$252.00	\$21.00/bottle
2021 Vin Gris	\$30.00	\$252.00	\$21.00/bottle
2021 Madam Preston	\$40.00	\$336.00	\$28.00/bottle
<b>Red Wines</b>			
2019 Grenache	\$38.00	\$319.00	\$26.60/bottle
2019 Mourvedre	\$38.00	\$319.00	\$26.60/bottle
2020 Zinfandel	\$40.00	\$336.00	\$28.00/bottle
2020 Petite Sirah	\$38.00	\$319.00	\$26.60/bottle
2018 L. Preston	\$48.00	\$403.20	\$33.60/bottle
<b>2021 Apple Quince Cider</b>	\$16.00		
<b>2020 Chaste Maiden Olive Oil</b>	\$30/350 ml		

**Preston Farm and Winery**

9282 W. Dry Creek Rd. Healdsburg, Ca. 95448

Tel (707)433-3372 Fax (707)433-5307

[www.prestonfarmandwinery.com](http://www.prestonfarmandwinery.com) / [lainy@prestonfarmandwinery.com](mailto:lainy@prestonfarmandwinery.com)

