

PRESTON FARM & WINERY

April 2023
Wild Yeast and Such

Dear Wine Club Member,

If you've been paying attention you know about Paul Stamets the author and prolific exponent of the power of mushrooms and everything fungal. That's right up our alley, of course, being fermenters of wine and proponents of wild grape fermentation as an expression of terroir. Perhaps you have also read or heard about the extent of terrestrial mushrooms, some reaching out hundreds of acres to feed, feed on, and communicate with disparate creatures of every stripe.

Early in my winemaking career all those many years ago I learned of the variety of commercial wine yeasts available that would do different things with or to your vinous beverage. I have long since forgotten the names and labels, but there would be the fermentation agent that survives excessively high alcohols resulting from having picked the grapes too ripe; the specialty spores that enhance the floral "linalool" scent of muscats and rieslings; others to protect the grassy sassiness of Sauvignon/Fumes from Sancerre. Leave it to American "better living through chemistry" you can fuss and tweak your wines with yeasts to jump through hoops and even rub your back.

Living close to the land as we do the salience and ubiquity of fungal organisms has increasingly impressed itself on my awareness. What I put in my body has become more important as I age also causing me to think about health as an expression of terroir—what goes in or on eventually comes out once it has done its work. I find the acronym SCOBY a fascinating word salad of interconnecting parts—Symbiotic Colony of Bacteria and Yeast that umbrellas so many things we find around us. It's so much more than that disgusting mass that floats to the top of your probiotic kombucha fermentation; it's the ubiquitous handshake of microorganisms everywhere making the world work.

What do you think of that stuff that grows in old oak trees, looks dead, and your grandfather told you it was a moss that is killing the tree. Well, as an aging aficionado of facial hair I fondly refer to it by its colloquial moniker "old man's beard" otherwise known as Usnea. Who woulda thought it's a fungus? I just like it and am glad to see it in so many trees along the creek; it makes me feel like I'm at a party.

Perhaps you are of the persuasion that funguses can save the world from human waste and spoils. After listening to a fascinating lecture by Stamets at the EcoFarm conference years ago I had decided to remediate a potentially polluting spill here on the farm using mushrooms. No, it wasn't Armageddon but I wanted to clean up a mess of vegetable oil that had drained from one of our tractor engines. I cultured some oyster mushroom spores and built a happy mushroom habitat in a nest of straw, feeding it oil daily. You're expecting me to say the oil all went away or turned to compost, right? Nope. But I felt so noble doing it. And it gave me something to talk about at EcoFarm.

The subject of yeasts as an agent of change popped into my head recently during a workshop I attended on bread baking. I've spoken many times of my curiosity about and experience with sourdough starters and I have even parroted the "my grandmother's starter" meme suggesting its uniqueness and indestructibility. In this class we created a starter from scratch using sugar water and some dried fruit as a source of the microorganisms. Bingo, it fermented just fine and made some pretty decent bread without any grandmother.

My wondering mind then went back a few chapters to a recent effort to make wild-crafted beer. You start with some sugar water, browse the creek or garden for some native blossoms—I found mugwort for one and elderflower for the other. Combine them in a container, set aside, and wait. Amazing! Just like the bread these native organisms are the engine creating the complexities, the uniqueness and the distinction of naturally elevated foods. Bread. Wine. Beer. Soy. Pickles. Kombucha. When you do it in your place, it's truly yours. Bugs are your terroir.

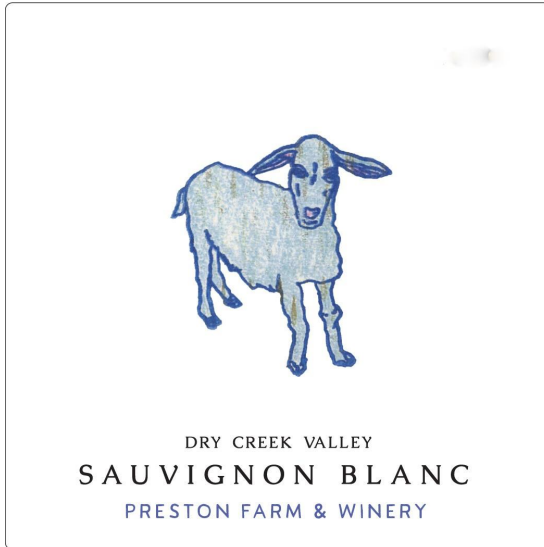
To wrap up this diatribe let me share how I feel about the role of the farmer. Things like amending nutrients, irrigation timing, and selecting the right plants are mere appurtenances of farming. The true essence of husbandry here is to honor and protect the microbiome of the ecosystem and the community of plants it supports. The current wisdom to practice minimal tillage is really an echo of the distant past: consider the exhortation of Rudolf Steiner's nascent biodynamics to read the cosmos for its influence on energy cycles; or native peoples' practice of companion planting for its mutually supportive community. What grows on the soil is an expression of what grows in the soil, and that is our job to protect.

Years ago I suffered the indignity of someone throwing away my sourdough bread starter. Today I would say, no problem. It's out there: in the air, in the grain, in the dirt on the floor—I can always get it back. And as my old mentor Jim Guadagni would say, just put your ear up to the wine barrel; you can hear it—without adding anything.

Today is Earth Day; seems right. Cheers.

Lou

PRESTON FARM & WINERY



2022 Sauvignon Blanc

Dry Creek Valley
Organically Grown
Estate-Bottled

100% Sauvignon Blanc

12.8% Alcohol

TA: 6.8 g/L

pH: 3.26

Aging: 3-4 years from vintage

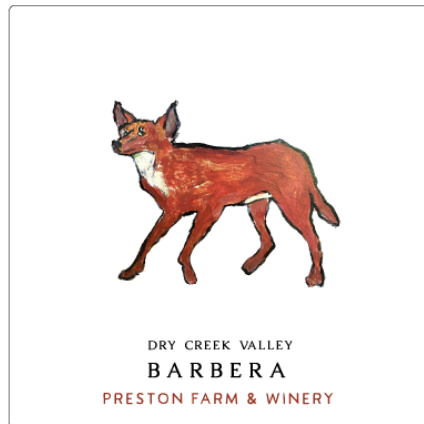
Cases produced: 1044

Winemaker Notes

Our Sauvignon Blanc blocks – planted on ancient creek-beds and growing with an almost feral unruliness – take a while to harvest, so we started there in the third week of August and continued on for each of the next four days. The wine sees a brief maceration on the skins before being fermented in 85% stainless steel tanks and 15% french oak barrel. The result of this straightforward process is a focused, refreshing wine with intense natural acidity, its sharper edges rounded out by the barrel-fermented portion. The nose shows generous lemon peel, lemongrass, just-ripe tropical fruit and a subtle herbal element of cut orchard-grass and wild thyme. Rich, lemon-oil acidity carries the palate, with mineral accents of oyster shell before a quenching, pure finish. –GH

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

PRESTON FARM & WINERY



2021 Barbera
Dry Creek Valley
Organically Grown
Estate-Bottled

100% Barbera
14.0% Alcohol
TA: 7.2 g/L
pH: 3.35
602 cases produced

Winemaker Notes

2021 was a dry year with early budbreak and delightfully non-eventful weather. Harvest began in late August and proceeded at a steady, manageable rhythm; the Barbera was picked toward the back end of the season in mid-September. Half of the fruit was crushed under foot in tank as whole bunches, and the other half de-stemmed and pumped to the same tank. After a 2 week fermentation the wine was pressed off and aged in neutral oak vessels of various sizes ranging from 60 to 540 gallons. We like the smaller ones (standard 60 gallon barrels) for their higher exposure to oxygen which invites complexity and sophistication, but rely on a large portion of the wine being aged in bigger vessels to preserve freshness and aromatic purity. Barbera is one of our more vintage-sensitive varietals and, fortunately, 2021 proved to be a great one. The wine shows focused aromatics of black and red cherry, with notes of red licorice and vanilla bean. Vibrant and juicy in the mouth with loads of berry, just-ripe plum, and hints of spiced orange. This stellar vintage has produced a wine with dense structure, though buoyed by plenty of its trademark acidity – it begs for hearty fare and is always the star of the show when Lou cooks pizza at our pick-up parties. -GH

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PRESTON FARM & WINERY



2021 Carignane
Dry Creek Valley
Organically Grown
Estate-Bottled

100% Carignane
12.9 % Alcohol
TA: 5.9 g/L
pH: 3.55
367 cases produced

Winemaker Notes

Our Carignane block in the Vogensen parcel is truly a gem of the entire Preston Vineyard: eighty year old vines stand, statuesque but sprawling, with the same dynamic balance inherent to a large, tangled oak. On harvest day in mid September, time slows a little, and we take care to sort and process the fruit from these soulful, weathered vines. With regard to winemaking, the wine is hardly “made” at all: the real work has already been done by the vines over most of the last century, their roots digging ever deeper in communion with the alluvial bench they stand on. Whole bunches of grapes are crushed by foot in a large open-top fermenter, and after a few weeks we drain the wine off to neutral barrels, where it ages for a year or so before bottling. A dynamic balance is expressed in the wine as well: within its unity is a tension between fruity notes of blackcurrant and plum and savory notes of leather and sap; and of granite and iron minerality vibrating with finely-grained tannic structure. A wine of energy and soul that represents a history of winegrowing in our corner of Dry Creek. –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 April 2023

| White Wines | Regular Bottle Price | Case With Club | Discount |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 2022 Sauvignon Blanc | \$32.00 | \$268.80 | \$22.40/bottle |
| 2021 Madam Preston | \$40.00 | \$336.00 | \$28.00/bottle |
| Red Wines | | | |
| 2021 Nero d'Avola | \$42.00 | \$352.80 | \$29.40/bottle |
| 2021 Barbera | \$38.00 | \$319.00 | \$26.60/bottle |
| 2021 Carignane | \$45.00 | \$378.00 | \$31.50/bottle |
| 2020 Zinfandel | \$40.00 | \$336.00 | \$28.00/bottle |
| 2018 L. Preston | \$48.00 | \$403.20 | \$33.60/bottle |
| 2021 Apple Quince Cider | \$16.00 | | |
| 2022 Chaste Maiden Olive Oil | \$30/375 ml \$50/750 ml | | |

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