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It is not necessarily those lands which are the most fertile or most favored in climate that seem to me the happiest, but those in which a long struggle of adaptation between man and his environment has brought out the best qualities of both. —T. S. Eliot

IF IT'S HARVEST, IT MUST BE RAINING

The introspective Yeats once wrote "there are three incompatible things man is always seeking - infinite feeling, infinite battle, and infinite repose." If he'd been here over the last few months, he'd have stated that in terms of the harvest. Feeling . . . battle . . . repose about describes it.

September's record rainfall (38.04 inches) pretty well dampened our spirits even before we got to the vineyard to pick. Botrytis (the "noble rot") moved in on the grapes, spreading like some kind of errant moss in a science fiction film. "These grapes are ugly" was one of the kinder remarks we heard from under a vine.

As harvest began the first week in October, we realized just how tedious and nitpicky a job was ahead. Grapes have to be sorted when they're botrytised. The light, moldy little bunches are hard to find and must be pressed as soon as they're picked. It becomes a battle to bring them in when it takes ten vines to fill a box rather than the normal three.

Alright, I suppose you're wondering "why bother?"

Well, if you've ever tasted a German Sauterne, you'll have your answer. Some of the rarest, most delicious wines begin and end with the "noble rot." (We don't care if they're ugly as long as they produce.) Our sugars ranged from 23 to 26 in both Chardonnay and Riesling and 21 in Cabernet. Is there an auslese resting in our cellar?

After all the scrambling, picking and pressing was over, total gallons amounted to a mere 2000 (compared to last year's 8000.) Fewer grapes? Yes. A nuisance to pick? Just ask the crew. But worth it? You bet! At least that's the feeling now that the grapes are all in.

Repose? . . . Ahhhhh. Well, we think about it. There are tastings, and deliveries and sales to be made. Maybe in January . . .

I DREAM OF CHARDONNAY WITH A LIGHT, GOLDEN AIR . . .

No. 25, FALL 1990

a little title perhaps, but if you’ve tasted our 1988 Chardonnays, than you know what we’re talking about.

A big vintage - five lots, each subtly different and just as good; so rich and elegant that you think of candlelight and roses on an anniversary.

Our Chardonnay has a range to it that few vineyards can match. One vintage is "crisp and firm," - flinty, like an early apple; other years, soft, with a delicate finish.

Who says Ohio wines can't compete with the best in the world? Did you know that our '88 beat Mondavi's $18.00 Chardonnay in a recent head-on challenge? No kidding. It did.

This is a vintage to tell your friends about (and I guess you have because they're showing up.) The '88 is as perfect at a picnic as it is at a palace. Put some away now because it won't be around very long . . . it ages well.

WINTER ON SOUTH RIDGE

Yes, we know. Ohio winters seem long, especially in March.

People ask us if we're open year round and we want to assure you, we are, every day except Sunday.

Pile the skis on your car and take a ride to Markko country for a day of cross country skiing you won’t forget. When your legs won't hold you up anymore, head for the winery and that glass of Chardonnay by the wood stove. Warms you up and winds you down. Our cozy tasting room holds 12 skiers comfortably (or three people and their gear.) Call ahead if you want to come with a group. We like a little notice so there's plenty of good rye bread and New York State cheese. See you in December when "the air is a knife with an edge" . . . and in March when the winter seems long.

MARKKO VINEYARD

Markko pups (12), 6 wks, TLC, thoroughly bred, comfortable around tractors, 88% loyal. 593-3197.
OFF THE LEES . . . . . After three weeks of harvest, you want to put your head in the sand where it's dry. Should we pick? . . . Okay, let's pick. No, better not. RAIN! It's hard to unwind when decisions rest on the edge of 'calling it wrong'. . . . Thinking back over the whole season, weather seemed to figure into just about everything that went on at Markko. It rained (or threatened to) on every single event this year . . . how about infinite rain, Mr. Yeats? Again, you came to Markko for a variety of events beginning with The Blessing of the Vines on June 2 where Father Lukehart gave his 'final' wave over the grapes (he's moved to a new assignment); and again in June on the 16th for Hilmak's succulent perch fry . . . on July 14, (while I was in Madrid, roasting) you joined your fellow chessmasters in a chilly Chardonnay Cup Tournament . . . on September 15, everyone showed up for the Odds 'n Ends Sale coming from as far as Cincinnati and Pittsburgh to look for a bargain or two . . . A donation of $85.00 went to the Conneaut Public Library collected at the O&E book sale. Thank You! . . . The following weekend, a wedding was held on the steps of the winery - a first for us . . . Hope to see you again at Sandisfield House December 1 and 2, and lots of times in-between . . . Thanks to every one of you who sent in their card opposing an increase in the wine tax. . . . I'm afraid we'll all feel the bite on this.

Catch this one - a challenge to anyone who can produce a Chardonnay that tops Markko's best in a blind tasting. Save your own favorites . More on this later. . . . We can't close this harvest without saying thank you to our picking crew of 20 and our regulars in the cellar. "Every man works better when he has companions working in the same line . . ." Nowhere is it more evident than in a small business like ours. To you, our customers - the ultimate judge - thank you for deciding in favor of our case.

“Wine offers a much deeper enjoyment than just the pleasure of its drinking. It is a healthful beverage which restores and fortifies the human spirit. Wine is truly a celebration of life.”

- Dr. Joseph Laird, Jr.

THE SHIRT OFF YOUR BACK
T-shirts are a dime a dozen, right? But everyone who sees this one, wants one. A hand-screened design of a monk hoeing his vineyard is framed with the words "GLADDED THY HEART." Printed in forest green and grape purple on a white, all-cotton shirt. Sizes: M, L, XL only. $12.50 ea.

"I do recommend one winery that has pleased me time and time again. Markko Vineyard in Conneaut does a good job with a Chardonnay that has a lemony, fresh-apple fruitiness, good, clean varietal character and plenty of body."

- Robert Parker,
  Parker’s Wine Buyer’s Guide
  1989-90