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 . . .
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 . . . Who will they pick on next? It is important to raise our collective voices about this issue. WINE IS A FOOD or haven't they heard. 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 Baird, 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 "GLADDEN THY HEART." Printed in forest green and grape purple on a white, all-cotton shirt. Sizes: M, L, XL only. $12.50 ea.

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ALCOHOL 12% BY VOLUME
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GOVERNMENT WARNING:
(1) ACCORDING TO THE SURGEON GENERAL WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS.
(2) CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY AND MAY CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS

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"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