



SPRING LETTER, 2009

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PETER MICHAEL
WINERY

Winemaker Nicolas "Nick" Morlet (far left) personally supervises sorting. Hand sorting of individual berries is the final step in ensuring that only the most perfect fruit makes its way into PMW wines.

SORTING OUT HARVEST

As with most things at Peter Michael Winery, it is not what we do, but more importantly, the attention to detail and care with which we do it that makes the wines so special. Our dedication to neo-classical winemaking is all about blending traditional hands-on methods with the best of modern technology.



One such traditional method is sorting, as old as winemaking itself. Some form of sorting is practiced by virtually all top wine producers. Peter Michael Winery is no different, rigorously sorting the

Inset: post-sorting, a handful of pristine berries contrasts vividly with the "jacks" and "shot" removed by our intensive three-stage sorting regime.

fruit that goes into all of our wines. However, we elevate this practice to a near obsession, blending modern technology with traditional hand labor. As a case study in this attention to detail, let's follow the fruit for Les Pavots through the sorting process, from vineyard to fermentation tank.

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“The idea of sorting is pretty simple and full of common sense. It is a natural extension of our quality-first viticulture philosophy.”

—Nicolas Morlet, Winemaker



Sunrise and morning fog cast a golden hue on a typical harvest scene in the Les Pavots vineyard. The keen eyes and skilled hands of our vineyard crew ensure that only the best clusters of grapes are harvested. Although it is labor-intensive, small 20-pound fruit boxes are used to eliminate the crushing of the grapes under their own weight as the fruit is transported to the winery.

Our vineyard crew plays an important role in this story. From a certain point of view, the entire growing season is a sorting process. Starting in the winter with careful hand pruning of the vines, we make the first selection by electing to keep crop loads very low. This forces the vines to put all of their energy into fewer berries, thus concentrating the expression of the vineyard's terroir. As we go through the growing season, additional selections are made as we elect to remove, or “drop” in vineyard parlance, any fruit that is developing less than perfectly.

Harvest provides the next opportunity to select only the best from the vineyard. We pick only by hand, starting

literally before sunrise. The skill and care of the vineyard crew comes into play yet again as their trained eyes select only the best clusters.

The goal is to get the fruit off the vine and deliver it to the winery in perfect condition. To accomplish this, we use 20-pound picking boxes. These are one fiftieth the size of the half-ton bins that are the “industry standard”. The smaller boxes, while a lot more labor intensive, ensure that the grapes are not crushed under their own weight on the way to the winery. We transport the full boxes to the winery on custom-built suspended trailers to minimize jostling.

Once at the winery, all red fruit passes through a three stage sorting regime. First is an inclined sorting table, essentially a slow moving conveyor belt. The fruit is spread out on the belt and several sets of hands go over it thoroughly, removing any clusters or pieces of clusters that are not up to standard, as well as any leaves that might be in the mix.

The sorted clusters are passed through the destemmer, a piece of equipment that gently removes the individual berries from the stems. The second stage of sorting is a device called “LeTrieur”, (literally “the sorter” in French), developed, in part, here at Peter Michael Winery. Luc Morlet, our former winemaker and current consultant, collaborated closely with one of our equipment suppliers on the concept and design. A specially configured sloped vibrating screen separates the perfectly formed berries from smaller unripe berries (shot) and the fragments of stems (jacks) left behind by the destemming process. These could introduce unwanted bitterness and “green” flavors into the wine. On a final conveyor belt, a crew of up to 16 picks through



the individual berries one last time to remove any that are less than perfect.

In the end, we are left with what our winemaker Nicolas Morlet calls the “caviar”, the most pristine, perfectly formed berries. These are gently transferred whole into our custom designed tanks to start maceration and fermentation. The extra care we take to deliver only the best fruit to the fermenters ensures that only the purest expression of the vineyard makes it into the finished wine.

Slowing fruit processing to as little as a quarter ton per hour, our intensive sorting process is time consum-



As many as 20 sets of hands are involved in the sorting of red fruit. An inclined sorting table leads to the destemmer. After destemming, individual berries are sorted twice more; once by special equipment and finally by hand.

Inset: The attention to detail of our vineyard staff is the backbone of our harvest and sorting operations. Individual berries pass over the gently shaking screen of “Le Trieur” under the watchful eye of vineyard worker Mario Garcia.

ing but worth it. Nick sums it up this way. “The idea of sorting is pretty simple and full of common sense. It is a natural extension of our quality-first viticulture philosophy: There are no excellent wines without excellent grapes handled with a lot of care.”

2009 SPRING RELEASE

The Winemaker's Tasting Notes

2007 LA CARRIÈRE

Estate Vineyard Chardonnay



Terroir-driven minerality remains the signature of this vineyard, with aromas of pastry, lily, hazelnut and pear. Accents of mandarin orange, acacia, honey and vanilla complete the bouquet. Presenting wonderful concentration and elegance on the palate, the wine is sculpted, rich, intense and creamy. Notes of citrus oils, white peaches and lemon frame the minerality. Its bright acidity and minerality will allow it to age for 2 decades, much like its Burgundian cousins from Puligny-Montrachet.

2007 BELLE CÔTE

Estate Vineyard Chardonnay



Very intense and hedonistic aromas of lychee nuts, citrus, rose petal and orange blossom come to mind with a background of mineral, bergamot orange, candied orange, peach, nutmeg, whole nut and toasted almond. The rich seamless palate is weighty in the mouth and very creamy. Notes of brioche and pain grillé coupled with crisp natural acidity complete the mouth feel. The 2007 Belle Côte is already expressive and will continue to develop its unique character for at least a decade.

2007 CUVÉE INDIGÈNE

Chardonnay



A very intense and expressive nose of brioche, peach blossom, candied orange, lemon oil, yellow peaches and dry apricot interacts with vanilla, toasted hazelnut, meringue and subtle white truffle to form a multi-layered and very intense bouquet. Very complex, creamy, ample texture, a lot of “gras” and balanced with a lingering perfumed finish. This vintage of Cuvée Indigène will age and continue to express its potential for two decades, much like its Burgundian cousins from Corton-Charlemagne.

2006 LES PAVOTS

Estate Vineyard Red Bordeaux Blend



Dense, almost black in color, 2006 Les Pavots reveals a profound bouquet of black cherry, licorice, black currant, blueberry pie and blackberry, combined with chocolate, vanilla, coffee, black tea, subtle spice notes of cloves and cinnamon and its distinctive “garrigue” touch. Very full-bodied yet graceful, the wine confirms the same rich, ripe fruit impressions on the palate with spice and black truffle. The mouth feel is massive and round with silky tannins and hints of mocha leading to a very long finish. Complex and intense, 2006 Les Pavots will benefit from three years of cellaring and will age gracefully for two decades or more.

THE GROWING SEASONS AND HARVESTS

By Nicolas Morlet, Winemaker

THE 2006 VINTAGE

Winter and spring were very wet, with some hail and snow. A late spring cold snap resulted in slight frost damage, but did not affect the quality of the harvest. Throughout the estate, bud break, bloom and set occurred a little bit late but very evenly for all varieties. The weather was nearly perfect for fruit development from May through harvest. While there was one sharp heat spike in July, diligent attention by the vineyard staff prevented any crop damage. As the fruit matured, hand thinning carefully trimmed the yields to a moderately low level, allowing a pure expression of our different terroirs. Excellent sunny conditions and two periods of strong wind significantly accelerated the phenolic and physiologic ripening. Then warm and mild conditions set in, allowing us to calmly pick each micro-parcel at the peak of ripeness. The harvest finished relatively late on November 2nd.

THE 2007 VINTAGE

The 2007 growing season began dry. Bud break, bloom and set occurred a bit early and very evenly. The weather was ideal for fruit development from May through harvest, with perfect warm days and cool nights. This contrast of day and night temperatures is ideal for the biosynthesis of the aroma and phenolic compounds. These perfect weather conditions allowed us to calmly pick the Chardonnay at the peak of ripeness. As a result, the 2007 wines are very intense and complex with a pronounced bouquet of blossoms, fruit and mineral. The length of the wines is impressively lingering and perfumed, promising excellent aging potential.

“Mountain vineyards, classical winemaking, limited production”



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SAVE THE DATES!

Two exceptional culinary experiences in 2009 to benefit the Sir Peter and Lady Michael Foundation

THURSDAY, APRIL 30TH

HANDS AND HEARTS NEW YORK
Dinner and Live auction at Per Se in
Time Warner Center

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8TH

STARS 2009 AT CÔTE DEUX MILLE
Dinner and Live auction on the
Peter Michael Estate



HANDS AND HEARTS
FOR CANCER

Hosted by the Michael Family

Menus by Chef Thomas Keller

Wines by Peter Michael Winery

Service by Per Se and French Laundry

Reservations being accepted at
415-339-0400

www.petermichaelfoundation.org