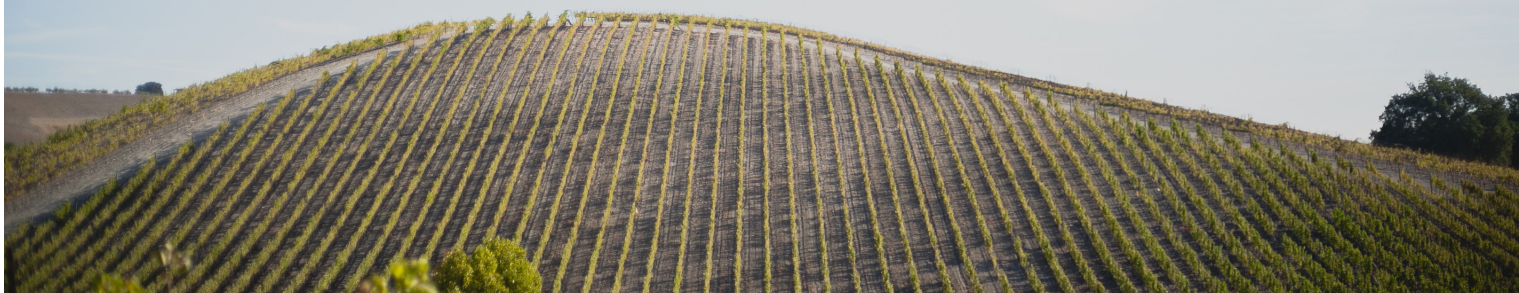


L'Aventure Winery

2017 Newsletter

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Tasting Notes for the 2015 Vintage

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, the 2015 vintage was one of the most surprising vintages for Stephan Asseo. He ended up harvesting 30% of our regular crop due to shatter, which occurred mainly on our Cabernet Sauvignon, but also on our Syrah and Petit Verdot. By no means did this affect the quality of our wine, but it did affect the quantity significantly! What surprised Stephan with this vintage was the fact that he was expecting a more “early, hot year” California style vintage and instead got quite the opposite. In terms of style, the wines reflect a more “cool year” vintage which means more on the complexity and spiciness and not so much on the power. You will find these wines beautifully structured, full bodied, with a very nice, long finish! Stephan may have been surprised, but he is nonetheless very proud of this small vintage.

Please see below the tasting notes written by Jeb Dunnuck from the Wine Advocate when he tasted the 2015 Vintage in barrels.

Optimus 2015

60% Syrah, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Petit Verdot

The entry level wine is the Optimus Cuvée...and it's inky purple color is followed by great aromatics of cassis, black raspberries, licorice and roasted herbs. Picking up more chalky minerality on the palate, this full-bodied, charming, forward 2015 will drink nicely right out of the gate.

Estate Cuvée 2015

55% Syrah, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petit Verdot

Tasted out of multiple barrels, the Estate Cuvée is close to the 2011 in style with its fresh, lively array of blackberry, spice, graphite and lead pencil shaving aromas and flavors. Showing more Cabernet character on the palate, with beautiful fruit, full-bodied richness and classy, integrated oak, it will need 2-3 years of cellaring and should drink nicely over the following decade or more.

Chloé 2015

66% Syrah, 34% Grenache Co-Fermented

A blockbuster in the vintage is the 2015 Cuvée Chloé, which is always a 70/30 mix of Syrah from two parcels...These are co-fermented, with plenty of stem inclusion, and it's brought up in barrel. Rich, decadent, full-bodied and layered, with lots of chalky tannin, notes of black currants, black licorice and roasted herbs, and a deep, concentrated profile on the palate, give bottles a year or three and enjoy through 2027.

Côte à Côte 2015

60% Grenache, 30% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah

Leading off the reds from barrel, the full-bodied 2015 Côte à Côte has an elegant, cool climate feel (which can be common in the vintage) as well as pretty, elegant notes of violets, raspberries, peppery herbs and black cherries. The final blend will be a mix roughly 60% barrels and 40% in concrete and amphora, and it should have a decade of longevity.

Cuvée “Les Demoiselles” 2015

60% Mourvèdre, 40% Syrah

The 2015 Demoiselles Proprietary Red sports a deep ruby/purple color to go with lots of black fruits, peppered meat, crushed rock and smoked earth. Big, full-bodied, concentrated and structured, this is a backwards, unevolved 2015 that has plenty of tannin and superb purity. Short term cellaring will be the name of the game.

For Her 2015

50% Syrah, 32% Monastrell, 10% Grenache, 8% Viognier Co-Fermented

What I've found to be the most compelling wine from Stephan in recent vintages, the 2015 For Her is ... inky colored, opaque, full-bodied and fabulously pure and seamless, with sensational notes of violets, crushed flowers, jammy blackberries and raspberries, this beauty never puts a foot wrong and shines for its impeccable balance and purity. Count me a fan and I can't wait to try this from bottle next year.

2016 From Stephan's Perspective

Lets start by explaining the harvest season and the vintage in general. The 2016 harvest was quite early, we harvested nonstop from early September for the Viognier to mid October for the Petit Verdot. With that said, due to somewhat perfect weather conditions, we had no heat waves. Therefore we did not have too much dehydrated fruit and had a smooth beautiful maturation achievement which maybe explains the characteristics of the 2016 Vintage. Already, the good news is that 2016, in terms of volume, was definitely higher than 2015, but still in the "low yield" philosophy of L'Aventure. Also, the Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot were definitely a step up above, not only in quantity but in quality. Overall, the 2016 Vintage, even though it could have been a big California style (early harvest), and even if it's a little too early (the wines are still not blended), appears, after the few tastings I have done, to be a less overripe style and more on the spiciness and finness. Even if it's different, ironically, it reminds me of the 2015 Vintage with maybe more flesh and volume. I look forward to blending the wines in March 2017 and have an even better idea of what the vintage will look like...



The L'Aventure Harvest Team celebrating the end of harvest on October 11, 2016. From left to right: Michael, Conner, Caroline, Dave, Beatrice, Stephan, Chloe and Patrick.

Now, lets talk a little bit about what I did in the vineyard. In 2016, I finally (after three years of debating) pulled out my Roussanne which was producing nothing. Even though it was super good, I decided to replace the bottom of this block (cooler) with a new plantation of Roussanne and the rest of the block with my personal massal selection of one of my favorite clones of Syrah. At the end, half of the block should be able to produce more Roussanne than before, which is good because I love when my Estate Cuvée Blanc is mainly Roussanne. In the last few vintages, the Estate Cuvée Blanc was less and less Roussanne and more and more Grenache Blanc and Viognier. I am also very excited and I can't wait to have the first fruit of this massal selection of Syrah, but I will have to be patient because like the Rousanne, my first crop will not be before 2018 or even 2019. The result of this decision I made means that I wasn't able to produce any Estate Cuvée Blanc in 2016 because like I said I want this wine to have a lot of Roussanne. I bet you are wondering what I decided to do with my Viognier and Grenache Blanc, then? Like the last three years, I used part of my Viognier to make this beautiful cuvée called For Her and I also experimented a tank with a beautiful block of Syrah co-fermented with Grenache Blanc which will be part of the Côte à Côte or Les Demoiselles blend.



Also in the vineyard, since already the last three years, but mostly in the winter of 2015/2016, I decided to replace all the weak or dead vines in the existing parcels (5,000 vines) to keep my density as high as it was at the planting of those blocks.

Effectively, using organic techniques and controlling the weeds mechanically and not with herbicides means that every time we drive some tools with the tractor we cut or damage some beautiful vines and year after year that can represent a substantial amount. Also, with the weather conditions in California being kind of extreme, some vines never grow how I would like. That is the reason, and for me it is very important, that every year we need to make this job. The bad side is that it is very long work, because we have to: remove the stakes, then pull out the old or bad vines, then remark the spots with a plastic knife, then make a big hole with a special machine that I imported from France to decompact the soil and remove the old roots, then remeasure the spacing, put a new stake, and finally plant a new vine. It is crazy, but it is at this price that I am proud of my vineyard. This work never ends and it is the only way to keep a healthy and I hope "40+ years old" vines which will produce I hope even better wines. That is one of the multiple actions when I speak about high maintenance viticulture.

Lastly, in 2016 we finally completed a long project (and dream of mine), caves attached to a brand new tasting room. After many years of battling with permits, construction, etc, we finally opened the doors last summer and put the first barrels in! Now in regards to our new tasting room, we wanted to create a modern, simple design where guests could come in and do a flight tasting of our current releases while looking through the glass windows at the vineyard. We are still by appointment only to make sure that we give the best experience to our guests. With this new project we were also able to create a Private Tour and Tasting Experience where I personally trained my staff to show and discuss the vineyard, the winery, winemaking techniques, the caves and barrels. Lastly, guests will then do a sit down tasting in my library room and taste through some special cuvées. I think it is a pretty special experience.

Now lets talk a little bit about the caves, as a lot of people ask why build them? What does it actually do to the wine? Well first of all, on an ecological reason, by having caves I no longer have to use outside energy (ie, air conditioning) to keep the temperature cool at all times and the humidity just right. In the caves, the temperature is consistently cool at 58°-60°F and the humidity is naturally always at 75%-80%. Also, air conditioning dries out the air which results in evaporation and loss of wine. Therefore, by no longer using it I will have less evaporation and more wine. Lastly, I will be able to contain a more stable alcohol percentage with my wines as before it would increase .2-.3% due to the evaporation. I firmly believe that this consistency will only be a plus to my wines, but I guess we will see as the 2016 vintage is the first ever vintage to be completely aged in the caves. Speaking of aging, this year I decided to do a little experiment and use for the first time some clay and cement for two of my Rhône Blends. The first one will be “Cuvée Les Demoiselles” which 25% will be in one amphora (clay), 38% in 1-year-old French oak and 37% in new French oak. In my thinking, the wine in the amphora should keep more primary aspect, aromas, and maybe more freshness. The ultimate goal when I will blend together is to bring an additional touch of complexity. The second one will be on the Côte à Côte where, for the first year I introduced a concrete tank (26%), one amphora (18%), and the rest in 26% 1-year-old French oak and 30% new French oak. The blend of the Côte à Côte being mostly Grenache, I think that the concrete will limit the micro oxygenation, keeping with the Demoiselles, more vibrancy, freshness, and authentic varietal aromas. The amphora should be in the middle between the concrete and the oak meaning a touch more evolution and the wine in barrels will bring some complexity with a touch of oak.

For both cuvées, I could have and maybe even prefer the wine in straight concrete or straight clay or straight barrel, but I think that the blend of all three will bring more complexity. That being said, lets speak about it at the pick up party because by that time I will have tasted individually each lot before blending them together for the bottling and I will be able to see and feel if the reality matches my thought.



The new tasting room (top picture) and the inside of our cave showing the forms of aging utilized for the 2015 vintage: barrels, amphoras from Italy, as well as, the concrete cone.

A Lesson in Wine Terminology with Stephan



Canopy: One of the most important aspects of vineyard management!!! It is the collective parts of the grapevine’s fruit, trunk, shoots, cordons and leaves. Our canopy is extensive, more than four feet tall, allowing a huge amount of leaf growth (see picture on the left). We systematically trim the canopy to ensure optimal sunlight penetration, maximizing photosynthesis to promote greater maturity of the polyphenols that provide the intense color and soft tannins of L’Aventure wines.

Cuvée: Referred to in wine as a blend resulting from mixing different wines or varieties together. In our case, we use the name for our flagship wine, the Estate Cuvée, which is a “crazy” blend of Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot.

Micro-Climate: The climate of a small, specific place within a larger area. Our micro-climate is due to our close proximity to the ocean, the vineyard is characterized by warm clear days with nighttime temperatures which can drop by approximately 40 degrees. The change in temperature increases the time of the grapes maturation cycle creating fruit with more complexity and balance.

Pump-Over: This is the time when harvested fruit is fermenting in a tank and we take the juice from the bottom of the tank and pump it over the cap (composition of grape skins on the top of the tank) to re distribute the grape skins in the juice to extract color and get the maximum flavors and tannins.

Topography: Physical features that make an area or piece of land such as mountains, valleys, plains and bodies of water. In our case it was the rolling hills on our property that made us fall in love with the land in the beginning. With this particular topography, we planted our vines to get as many different exposures as possible and get as many different characteristics for each of our varieties.

New Faces Join the L'Aventure Team



Time changes, life moves on, and here at L'Aventure we have welcomed some new faces to join the team. Back in April, Darren, our Production Manager got a great opportunity to move to Oregon and work for an environmental/geological group. In May, Jillian Robinson, our Tasting Room Manager wanted to change scenery and embark in new adventures. Lastly, in December, Marissa our long time Office Manager got offered a position for a vineyard management company as a manager. Here at L'Aventure we try very hard to keep our employees "forever" but we are also the first ones to support our team members when a great opportunity comes their way! As sad as we were to see them leave, we have found some great people to replace them...

Meet Patrick, our new Production Manager that joined the team right after Darren left. Originally from Palo, Texas (North of Dallas), his parents started a vineyard in 1999 planting Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, and Chardonnay. From the moment Patrick helped his dad pull out the old vines and planted the new ones, he knew he wanted to work in the wine industry. He moved to Paso Robles in 2005 as he felt the area was fast growing and had some experienced winemaker to learn from. Before joining the team, Patrick was working for an established winery as Cellar Master but wanted to return to the vineyard and not just work in the cellar. Now, Patrick works closely with Dave to be Stephan's eyes and ears in the vineyard. He assists in daily cellar activities, assists Stephan in the winemaking process as well as insuring that proper cellar practices are in place at all times. He is also involved in vineyard maintenance, tractor driving and irrigation repairs. Lets just say we keep him busy!

The second addition to the team is Daniella, our new Tasting Room Manager, who replaced Jillian in May. She is a California native and has lived for most of her life in Los Angeles. While managing a restaurant in West Hollywood she had the opportunity to meet with wine representatives and winemakers and became quite interested in the wine industry. When she finally decided to move to Paso Robles, she felt it was the perfect time to leave the restaurant industry and focus on wine. Intrigued by the story behind L'Aventure and starting her own little adventure by moving to Paso, Daniella applied for the job! Today, Daniella takes care of managing the tasting room staff, inventory, the flow of the tasting room, assisting our wine club members, and making sure that all guests that visit have a great experience. She loves to visit new wineries and learn as much about wine as possible and to share it with the guests that come visit. We are lucky to have her!

Last but not least, meet Allie who joined the team a couple months ago as our new Office Manager. Allie is from Hanford, CA where like she said "there are more cows than people"! At first she had no plans in working in the wine industry as she went to school to become a teacher but after a couple of years in school she realized that teaching was not for her. After graduating from college she started working for a winery in the area as an administrative assistant. She then worked for another local winery as an accountant and compliance manager! Finally, she got hired the beginning of January at L'Aventure, where she takes care of accounting, inventory, sales reconciliations, as well as being Stephan's personal assistant! She is always up for a challenge and has helped us tremendously in making sure everything runs smoothly! Thank you Allie!

We are looking forward to keeping them... "forever".

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