

# L'AVENTURE NEWSLETTER

## 2010 VINTAGE NOTES

2010 was a challenging year in which we witnessed a continuation of the cooling trend that set in following the 2006 vintage. It was also a very wet year by Paso Robles standards. In stark contrast to the 18 inches of rain we received in 2009, the 2010 vintage rainfall totaled 31 inches! The vines absolutely loved all of the moisture producing a very vigorous canopy and setting large quantities of fruit.

In a vintage such as 2010, Stephan's experience managing the exhaustive vineyard practices and selection process really pays off. In the vineyard he kept the yields down by thinning early growing shoots down to one per spur position. He also dropped green clusters when the vines pushed more fruit than he desired. With all of that extra canopy and fruit, of course Mother Nature decided to throw another curve ball by giving us a very cool summer. To aid our fruit in ripening, we dropped leaves on the east side of the canopy to allow more early sun exposure while retaining the western leaves to protect from harsh afternoon exposure.

In the winery, Stephan expanded his sorting system by adding a second vibrating sorting table to the mix. This new tool provided us with perfectly clean berries. He then fermented these berries as individual blocks which provided a broad palate from which to blend his cuvées. As the berries were fed into the tanks for fermentation he performed a *saignée* (the bleeding of juice from the must). This process is used to concentrate the skin to juice



ratio for increased extraction of color and tannin in the red wines. The other bonus of the *saignée* is that we also reap the benefit of a very nice Rosé. Using all of these tools, we took a season of difficult conditions and fashioned a set of spectacular wines from them.

Stephan was very particular in choosing the best, most developed fruit from his consistently great vineyard blocks to fashion his top Côte à Côte and Estate Cuvée blends. This means that there is very little of each wine... roughly 1,200 cases of Estate Cuvée, and less than 1,000 cases of Côte à Côte. We believe the results will be that these are two of the very best wines that will emerge from Paso Robles in the 2010 vintage. This also means that Optimus was the beneficiary of a significant quantity of fruit that typically is allocated to Estate Cuvée, so look for it to be a stunning wine as well.

Cabernet Sauvignon had a very tough go and was again a low yielder. We had a dramatic heat spike in late

April and significant shatter occurred in a couple of the blocks. Fortunately, what we did not receive in quantity was made up for in quality and Stephan was able to craft a beautiful Cabernet with the fruit that he had available. With the decreased fruit set (and the fact that Cabernet is included in both of our main blends Optimus and Estate Cuvée), there will only be a hundred or so cases available.

Stephan has also assembled a trio of "Members Only" blends from the vintage. He decided to re-introduce Le Grand Verdot, a Petit Verdot based blend that was last produced in 2008. The other two special cuvées are GSMs. You may recognize The Sibling from the 2009 vintage. It is the sister to our Côte à Côte and is designed to be approachable without extended aging. Rounding out the group of GSMs is the aptly named La Suite.... In this blend Mourvedre takes the spotlight, providing dark, rich fruit and showcasing the versatility of the GSM blend at L'Aventure.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2010 Vintage Notes	1
2010 Tasting Notes	2
Cuvée Chloe	3
Cirol	3
Dans Le vignoble	3



## 2010 VINTAGE TASTING NOTES

The 2010 vintage at L'Aventure produced wines of great attack, length, and depth, with very appealing elegance and classic styling. Following are notes on the wines.

### Optimus 2010

55% Syrah, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Petit Verdot

Assertive aromas of cola nut and bright cherry fruit, as well as cocoa and mineral notes. A wave of lush fruit attacks the palate, with cherry and blueberry underpinned by leather and a peppery zest. A very juicy mouth feel, well structured, with good acidity and a well integrated finish of soft tannin and French oak. This wine will drink very well in its youth.

### Côte à Côte 2010

42% Grenache, 34% Syrah, 24% Mourvedre

An explosive nose of fresh fruit and pastille candies. The palate is broad and vibrant, with great acidity that carries the complex red and blue fruit flavors of fresh plum, dark cherries and blueberries long towards a well integrated finish. Wonderful pepper and anise notes flirt with the fruit, and give great form to this wine.

### Estate Cuvée 2010

42% Syrah, 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Petit Verdot

This is one of the more classic versions of Stephan's iconic Cab/Syrah blend. While generously juicy, in the spirit of the vintage, it captures the essence of the blend with exuberant Syrah notes brought to heel by an almost austere Cabernet. The attack is grand, with cassis and cola, licorice and graphite, ending in a gripping, long, deep, complex finish. As usual, there are so many complexities and layers of flavor in this wine, that you

really need to lay down a few cases and watch it develop over the years. This is definitely *la crème de la crème* from the 2010 range.

### Cabernet Sauvignon 2010

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

Classic, extremely well balanced palate, peppery, herbal notes in the nose, bright, good density and breed. In a blind tasting, this wine will make you wonder..."California, or France?" Very confidential, as Stephan says. Members only, no outside sales.

### The Sibling 2010

70% Syrah, 15% Grenache, 15% Mourvedre

No "red headed stepchild" to Côte à Côte, this wine is absolutely delicious! All of the charm of the southern Rhône is here. Grenache and Syrah team up to deliver soft, floral, juicy, fruity aromas and flavors. This is a wine to drink while young, and one that will rival any Rhône styled wine from the area. This is one of Stephan's quintessential "pleasure wines"! Members only.

### La Suite... 2010

43% Grenache, 40% Mourvedre, 17% Syrah

The depth and range of aromas and fruit in this wine is engaging. It is so totally different from Sibling, so definitely L'Aventure, delicious, dark Mourvedre and sensuous Grenache meeting on equal footing. Call it Plus 17 if you will! Members only.

### Le Grand Verdot 2010

70% Petit Verdot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Syrah

A deep, brooding nose of graphite, tea leaf, and grapes belies the massive attack of black fruit, mineral, and leather notes. A very

masculine wine, with an elegant line through the palate, and very well integrated finish. This one should lie down and take a nap...for a few years! Members only.

### Cuvée Chloé 2010

70% Syrah, 30% Grenache.

Please see article dedicated to this unique wine.

Made from Syrah from Stephan's coolest block, and his very best, old vine Grenache, Cuvée Chloé is perhaps the most distinctive wine from the vintage. The blend brings out the exuberant and outgoing best in both varieties. High tone aromas of pastille candies and juicy Grenache fruit mingle with floral notes to make a very pretty nose. The mouth is supple, with a slightly peppery vein running through the vibrant red fruit. The wine finishes in an elegant flurry. The femininity of this wine is incontrovertible! This is truly a wine that is quite different than any other that Stephan has made before, or, for that matter, that we have seen here in Paso.

### Estate Cuvée Blanc 2011

51% Roussanne, 49% Grenache Blanc

This is the most complex, profound, and elegant white wine from our vineyards to date. With the Grenache Blanc now at fourth leaf, the fruit is starting to have an impact on the style and quality of the white cuvée. One can only imagine what the future holds for this wine if the results are this impressive in its youth.

The wine is deep straw-gold in color. The perfume is rich, with honey, macadamia nuts, pear nectar, and sautéed apples. A light, non pungent note of narcissus brings an earthy tone to the nose. In the mouth, a racy acid attack



# TASTING NOTES CONTINUED

subsides to reveal a palate of fresh figs, apples, and vanilla. An airy, light fennel presence adds spice to the finish.

### Estate Rosé 2011

70% Syrah, 20% Mourvedre, 10% Grenache

Perhaps the most classic

Rosé Stephan has made, this is a wine of excellent structure. A pearl rose cast, reminiscent of Vin Gris, colors the wine. Fresh, shadowy, subtle aromas of Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvedre are soft in the nose. Supple flavors of strawberry, rhubarb and blueberry skin run

elegantly along the palate in a tight line. This Rosé is not a typical "drink me yesterday" fruit chew, rather, it will accompany many foods, and will impress non Rosé drinkers with its quality and noble style.

## CUVÉE CHLOÉ BY STEPHAN ASSEO

Since my daughter Chloé was born, I thought one day, especially since moving to Paso Robles, where I have more creative freedom, I would be able to make a cuvée under her name. But I did not want to make just a marketing, or commercial cuvée, and that's the reason I waited so long to make one. I wanted a cuvée, a wine, that will be representative of her beauty and character. 2010 is the vintage that made this possible.



In this wine, all of the Syrah comes from one specific block, which is north faced, and produces a wine without to much exuberance or

flashiness, rather, it makes a wine of great elegance and depth. Coincidentally, I was able to co-ferment my best Grenache with this Syrah, for an amazing result.

Cuvée Chloe 2010 will be available on a first ordered basis to wine club members only.

Cuvée Chloé  
70% Syrah (McVey block)  
30% Grenache  
1,200 bottles produced.

## CIRO!

We have honored our local restaurants in past issues, as nothing proves to be a better friend to wine than the dining table? Here, however, we dispense with the table, and give you, straight from the oven....Ciro!

If you attended last year's members fête, you will recall Ciro's delectable flatbreads, offered as foils to Stephan's rich reds. We are pleased to announce that he will again be throwing his dough around at this years event. You will already have attended the Member Preview Weekend by the time you



receive this letter, but so what? We want nonetheless to thank him for his special gift, and to honor him with these few words.

Ciro Pasciuto was born in Gaeta, near Naples, into the

world of farm to table. He brought his inspired and authentic talent and philosophy first to Seattle, in 1986, and then to Paso Robles, in 2003, where, with his wife Kim, he has founded Skipping Stones. Whether catering, developing School gardens, or baking his famous (no lie!), highly sought after "Ciro bread", he will befriend you while fattening you up just a bit. How can you refuse? "The bite is uncontained joy", he exclaims.

A loaf of Ciro bread, a jug of L'Aventure, and you!



# DANS LE VIGNOBLE

## 2011 IN THE VINEYARD

### Stephan Vineyards & L'Aventure Winery

2815 Live Oak Road  
Paso Robles, CA 93446

Phone: 805-227-1588

Fax: 805-227-6988

Email: [stephanwines@tcsn.net](mailto:stephanwines@tcsn.net)

Visit us online at:

[www.aventurewine.com](http://www.aventurewine.com)

Continuing the trend set with the previous vintage, 2011 was a tough year in the vineyard. Bud break began this year in mid-March and everything was showing well until a late frost hit in April killing off some of our first shoots and reducing the crop by 15 to 20%. The biggest travesty of the frost is that it nearly wiped out all of our white fruit. In the end, we lost all of our Viognier and only brought in enough Roussanne and Grenache Blanc to produce three barrels of white wine. On the positive side, the fruit that we did harvest was wonderful and produced one of the best whites Stephan has made from the vineyard (see tasting notes for 2011 Estate Cuvée Blanc).

The frost also hit some of our early breaking Grenache and Syrah that were situated strangely enough in higher parts of the vineyard. We ended up losing nearly 50% of our Grenache and 20% of our Syrah from these blocks.

Adding insult to injury, an even more devastating occurrence was a late rain that appeared in June during the flowering cycle. This caused significant shatter which really hit our Cabernet hard. Shatter is what happens when the vines experience some unusual weather and decide to regulate themselves. The plant aborts the stamen of the flower so it will not pollinate and take energy away from



Bud break, flowering & fruit set



other growing areas of the vine. If you do not have pollinated flowers, you do not get fruit. We harvested as little as one quarter of a ton per acre where we have harvested two tons per acre in the past.

Rainfall this vintage was similar to 2010 with approx 30 inches falling on the vineyard. The vines took advantage of all of this rain with very vigorous growth. This caused Dave, Guillaume and our vineyard crew to spend a lot of time in the vineyard pruning, diking, thinning, trimming and training for what ended up as a low yielding vintage. They did get to use some new tools for the vintage to make things easier. We purchased a second trimmer to keep our canopies clean and even so they will uniformly soak in sunlight to promote ripening. We also started using a new tractor implement called the Actisol which flattens the rows after diking making it easier

for our crews to do work following the disk.

We experienced a cool summer similar to 2010 but had much less fruit on the vine so fruit ripening was not as big of an issue as the past vintage. The cooling trend did push back harvest to the very end of September. Once the fruit did start coming in, it did so very quickly and we were finished with harvest by November 10<sup>th</sup>. We had very low yields for the vintage and the quality of fruit looks very good. As Dave said, one great thing about this vintage is the low yields definitely made things easy on the sorting table and in the winery!

The wines are excellent, that is, what there is of them in the cellar. In the end, the 2011 vintage yielded roughly 4,000 cases, down nearly 50% from 2010. With a couple of "Members Only" cuvées in gestation that leaves precious little Optimus, Côte à Côte and Estate Cuvée for sale from this vintage.



Dave posing with our first Daffodil of Spring

