



November 1, 2016

Dear Friends,

As I sit down to pen my traditional harvest letter I am observing another post-harvest tradition as well. My post-harvest cold.

Tissues are on the left, decongestants on the right. A glass of water for hydration rather than an inspirational glass of Oregon Pinot noir.

The power of adrenaline and the human will never fail to amaze me. The immediacy, necessity, and energy of harvest simply don't allow the germs of this world to gain a foothold in this human body. Over nearly four decades of harvests my only days missed were in my first vintage. I was in California at the time. The winery received a very late shipment of Zinfandel that had been offered at a ridiculously low price. Naïve as I was, I didn't suspect anything amiss. While we processed the fruit I, of course, was sampling (eating) the fruit. Within a few hours I became wildly sick and by the morning was in a fetal position considering that a will should be written. It was of course only a frame of mind as I had no worldly possessions to pass on other than an old Rambler auto that only started when it felt like it. No joke, a Rambler.

Three days later and finally coherent, I was told that the fruit had been sprayed heavily and late with a rot spray. I had been chemically poisoned to what felt like an inch of my life. A lesson very well learned. Might explain some of my behavior to this day. Angela thinks so.

In 31 Oregon vintages I have never seen anything like this kind of irresponsible farming practice. From the beginning of the modern wine industry in Oregon the farming intent has been to be vigilant in protecting the health of our plants but to never go nuclear. Better to lose a percentage of crop than to use chemistry that may be unhealthful. Back then, organic, biodynamic, sustainable or nutrition based standards did not exist. It was simply that the ethos of our industry would not have it any other way. We are proud to be part of the Oregon viticultural family that continues to carry that flag.

Thinking of Angela, it dawned on me a few days past how remarkable the tenure is of our staff. I was my only employee for the first five years. As difficult as I was, I survived myself. My first hire was the lovely and talented Dale West who took over sales in Oregon. It was just he and I for the next six years. Then the business took off. Today, we have a fulltime staff of 16. Our average length of tenure is 14 years. Our combined years of industry experience is 210 years. When I think back to the beginning of this business, the many hurdles that were barely cleared, I know that to have this close knit family is our greatest achievement. So lucky and so blessed.

The 2016 vintage was lucky as well. We had very warm temperatures in the early spring which promoted a very early start to the season. This early start exposed us to quite a long period of frost “exposure”, but thankfully it never happened.

All of the critical times of vine development continued to be early but our summer months were in fact only mildly warm which led to a beautifully long growing season. We finished receiving fruit under stupidly beautiful blue skies thinking then that they would continue for weeks into a pleasant Indian summer. Within a few days all hell broke loose. Tornadoes on the coast. Sixty mile per hour winds. Not a problem. We were in the barn and safe from Mother Nature’s rage. Lucky.

The crop level of 2016 was quite low. We averaged just above two tons per acre. This is mostly due to the very small berry size of the vintage. Small berries give us greater intensity of color, aroma and texture. It is a magnificent vintage that combines density with balance and immediate appeal. We are in love.

Please join us November 25th and 26th at Ken Wright Cellars Winery, from 10am to 4pm for our annual barrel tasting. We very much look forward to seeing you.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Ken', written in a cursive style.

Ken