

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND VINEYARDS & WINERY

VERITAS IN VINUM

"Truth in Wine" - #2, Winter 2004-05

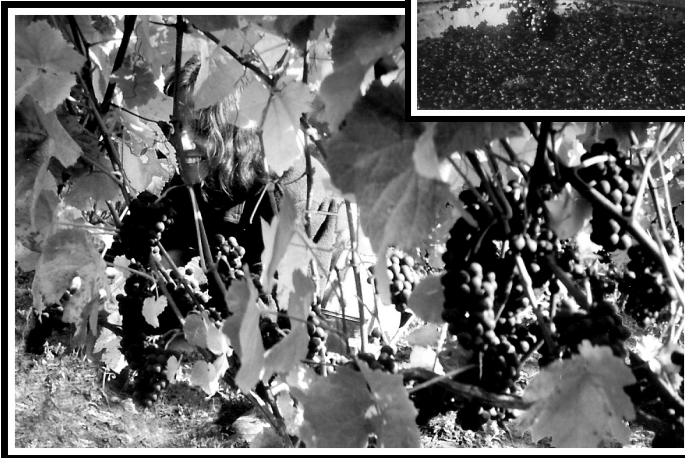
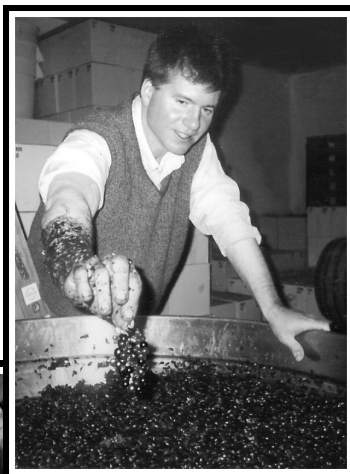
HARVEST 2004

Every vintage is different - and yet every year the emotional roller-coaster plays out the same. You anticipate the last day of picking in late October, thinking that the harvest will finally be over. But it isn't until a few weeks later that the wild ride actually begins to slow down...

The last hours in the vineyard invariably fall on a gloriously sunny, Indian-summer afternoon. As the final rows are shorn of grapes, everyone in the field playfully wonders, "Who will have the honor of picking the last cluster of the season?"

And when the snipping shears at last fall silent, a "Hurrah!" echoes through the vineyard. For everyone who helped us through the craziest month of the year, the season is over and the celebratory wine will flow. We join in the cheer, with extra reason to

rejoice: The grapes that we've nurtured for the past year are safely off the vine - no longer lunch for hungry birds, or hanging in mortal jeopardy pending a whimsical twist of the jet stream.



But the next morning we recall that the "party" is far from over. Some wines are just beginning their fermentation, while others are already close to their first racking. Each of them will require being

looked after daily. And all the while, the Pinot bubbles away - mysteriously fermenting on its own skins, still waiting to be pressed.

Only after the wines have been shepherded through this critical period of purgatorial alchemy, can we finally breathe a sigh of relief, and reflect on the year that's past. ⇨



Photo courtesy of The Bainbridge Review

A BARN UN-RAISING

The barn that Gerard built has taken its first steps towards a second life as home for the island's local 4-H chapter. The structure was donated by its new owner to the Trust for Working Landscapes which oversees the publically-owned Johnson Farm, where the barn will be reconstructed to host agricultural events.

The TWL board and a band of volunteers spent a recent weekend cutting the barn into sections to be transported four miles to its new location. Pending fundraising for building a foundation, the barn should be re-open for business by late next year.

⇒ 2004 will be remembered as a virtually perfect season. Our first sign that potentially great things were in the making was in late March, with budbreak nearly three weeks sooner than normal. If we could escape any late frosts, we would be well ahead of the year's game. And in fact, the extra margin held right through flowering in early June.

As summer came on, the hot dry days rolled by in a seemingly endless procession. Dust devils whirled in the vineyard, as the vines pushed water they tapped from deep below ground into dense clusters of small berries. By August, we were confident that all of the year's dinner wines would show off strong, undiluted fruit flavors and that we'd get great color in the Pinot.

But what about the Siegerrebe? It'd been three years since we had been able to produce a late harvest dessert wine, and even longer since releasing a botrytis-affected vintage. The arid autumn air left us little hope that the Noble Rot would settle onto the grapes transforming them into those ugly, fuzzy raisins of liquid gold.

Then it came! Just a few September showers slipped around our Olympic Mountain rainshadow to let the precious mold take hold. One month later, the fragile clusters were falling apart in our fingers as we gingerly lifted them off the vines. As I write, the Siegerrebe sits simmering through the long, slow fermentation characteristic of the most rare and exquisite wines in the world: The botrytized sauternes.

Indeed, 2004 gave us everything we could have hoped for. Now, as the November wind and rains pile on, we can finally rest. But not for too long - pruning season in January is just around the corner...

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE WINERY

December 5th & 11th

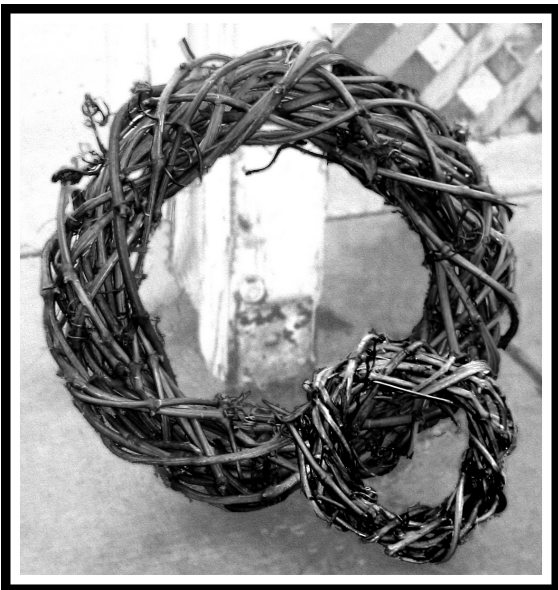
9 a.m. to Noon

WREATH-MAKING CLASSES

Come weave the perfect holiday wreath for your front door or over the mantle - and enjoy a lunch of hot soup, bread, wines and cheeses while you learn. Betsey Wittick, our viticulturist and assistant winemaker, will share with you artistic tips to produce grapevine wreaths that will grace your home for seasons to come!

All materials will be provided - including coffee. Dress for several hours outdoors, and bring your pruning shears.

\$40 per person. Please call to reserve your place: 206-842-9463 (A third class may be offered on January 8th, depending on demand.)



January 22nd & February 26th

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

PUGET SOUND GRAPE GROWING SEMINARS

An intensive full-day course for those who want to test their green thumb with viticulture in Western Washington. Lead by Gerard Bentrin, a grape-growing pioneer of the region with over a quarter-century of vineyard experience, this class will prepare you with everything you need to know - from 50 vines to 5,000!

Topics covered include: Site-selection and preparation, cool-climate varieties and propagation, trellising techniques, equipment, and disease and pest management. At least an hour will be spent in small groups doing hands-on pruning in mature vineyard.

\$120 per person includes a detailed booklet, morning coffee and snacks, and a gourmet lunch prepared by Jo Ann. Call soon - these famous annual classes fill up fast: 206-842-9463

February 19th, 20th & 21st

RED WINE & CHOCOLATES

All President's Day weekend, the wineries of the North Sound and Olympic Peninsula will be sampling their finest reds with luscious chocolate accompaniment. For more details about this event visit www.northsoundwineries.org.