

October 2011

We have been busy, busy, busy here in the winery. Last week we finished fermenting our final batch of grapes, 2 tons of Norton grown in our Asparagus vineyard. From August, 23rd to October, 10th we took in 42 tons of grapes and 540 gallons of juice to make a total of 7,300 gallons of wine. If you do the math, this will make 36,000 bottles or 3,000 cases of wine for the 2011 vintage. Not too shabby if you ask me. We've put all our reds in barrels and racked all our whites to clean tanks where they will rest until after Christmas. Except for a few odds and ends, we are ready to take our rest too.

Now that I have a chance to answer my phone and check messages, I have been surprised at the number of calls I've gotten in the past few days from home winemakers looking for juice and extra grapes. Many of you missed the season this year for local grapes, but you still have time for cider!

Before I was a winemaker, the first thing I tried to make was Hard Cider. I've tried several different ways to make it (different yeast, adding brown sugar, etc.) and consulted many books and EVERY attempt turned out terrible. That is, until I stopped trying and gave up. I accidentally left a jug of un-pasteurized cider that had been UV sterilized in the back of my fridge.... for like a month. I'm pretty daring so before throwing it out I took a slug and it was delicious! Apparently the key to a good cider is controlling the temperature during fermentation. If the cider hasn't been pasteurized there are still living yeasts in the juice that will do the work of turning all that sugar into alcohol and at the low temperature of your fridge, or a back porch, the fermentation will happen slowly which has a big effect on flavor. After the forgotten jug, I really stopped making Hard Cider myself and just let my fridge do it for me. Every year I go to the local apple orchard where they sell UV treated jugs of cider and throw a few in the back of the fridge. I'll have 1 glass from each jug to make room for air, and I open the cap once a week to release pressure. I also taste it while the cap is off just to see if it is done. When it tastes fizzy and like an apple wine cooler I pull it out and my husband and I spend the day drinking it like hillbillies right from the jug.

Try my way, or for more advanced techniques, check out this article in Mother Earth News from October 2007 about home cider making (<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Real-Food/2007-10-01/How-to-Make-Hard-Cider.aspx>).