

CHÂTEAU DES CHARMES 2005 HARVEST REPORT

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 8, 2005 (SECOND REPORT TODAY)

Grape Variety: Viognier

Vineyard Block: St. David's Bench Vineyard, west of the Château, near Concession 6 Rd.

Sub-appellation: St. David's Bench

Weather Conditions: Rain early morning, then cleared to be partly sunny, 18°C

Yield: 1.5 tonnes per acre

Brix: 24°

ph: 3.1

Total Acidity: 6.3

Field Notes:

Today was a busy day despite the rain delay. Viognier was also picked today. There has been increasing interest in Viognier in recent years. I think many consumers (me included) are looking for a meaty white wine that pairs well with food, that isn't a big oaky Chardonnay. Viognier is always my go-to variety in this situation. I did a little digging and asked a few questions of Paul Sr. and Paul Jr. about this grape. Here's what I found.

Viognier is one of the rarest grape varieties in the world with about 2000 hectares planted in the world predominantly in France and to a lesser extent California, Australia, South Africa and Canada. To put that into perspective, the Viognier plantings in France amount to about 0.1% of all the vines planted. We have a couple of acres on the St. David's Bench Vineyard. The most famous Viognier comes from the northern most part of the Rhone Valley in France around a little town called Condrieu. It is a challenging grape to grow, in any viticultural area. It can be quite fickle and it is important to not "over-crop". What is meant by this; these vines like to produce fruit. When you don't thin out the crop enough you end up with lower quality fruit. This year Mother Nature helped by keeping the yield low enough to produce high quality grapes.

At Château des Charmes we prefer our Viognier in a non-oaked style, rich in flavour and big in the mouth, yet with a crisp acidic backbone. It appears there are lots of fans of our Viognier, besides me. The 2003 vintage has been sold out at the winery for several months. 'Vintages' just released 168 cases as part of the August release. There are still a few cases in the system. If you would like to locate the nearest store with the our 2003 Viognier, St. David's Bench Vineyard, go to www.lcbo.com and type in 432948 in the product search field. We hope to release the 2004 vintage at the winery sometime in October. However, there will only be 289 cases so get it while you can. I have tasted the 2004 and it is stellar. From the numbers above, we anticipate that the 2005 vintage will live up to the reputation blazed by earlier vintages. The brix levels indicate it will have good alcohol, which translates to weight in the mouth. The ph is low indicating a good acidic backbone. Paul Sr. said that he will not allow malolactic fermentation to take place with the 2005 to ensure the acidity remains solid in the finished wine. This may prove to be one of the benchmark wines of the vintage. Let's cross our fingers.

As always, please feel free to email me directly if you have any suggestions or questions. Watch for many more postings as the harvest continues.

Michèle Bosc

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