



### Life On The Farm

At 10:00 A.M. every other Wednesday morning, ranging from early December to mid-June, six of us sit down to taste through our different lots of wines from the barrel. Typically, the group of tasters consists of our winemaker, Helen Turley, assistant wine maker, Bryan Kvamme, my father, Lee Martinelli, Sr., and my two brothers, Lee, Jr., and George, and myself, Julianna. The time spent on each of the small lots of wine is immense, as they are often divided into eight separate flights, and within each flight there may be nine glasses. Each flight is meticulously organized by Bryan according to harvest date, which vineyard block the grapes were picked from, by individual clones picked separately from each block, and the current stages of fermentation. The wines are tasted blind, so that we do not bring a preconception to the table that any particular wine harvested from an individual block in the vineyard or from a certain clone will or will not taste better than another. Of the eight different Pinot Noirs that we produce, not one tastes exactly the same, yet each of the separate wines from each of these separate vineyards remains distinctive to its own personality and varietal character year after year. It is for this specific reason we do not blend all of our Pinot Noirs together, honoring the special unique flavors in each one by reserving vineyard designations for each individual site. The detailed farming of the vineyard itself and the quality of the grapes is crucial to creating the great flavors in the finished wine. I love to sit and listen to the farmer and winemaker talk about what is currently happening outside in the vineyard and how the growing season is affecting the vines and the potential grape crop that year. To begin the bi-annual newsletter I start jotting down ideas long before the upcoming season. As the last cluster of grapes is picked and the vines leaves turn to golden hues in their dormant descent into winter, I began thinking about what to write for the spring newsletter. After burrowing through my filing cabinet I found one of the notes I had written to myself that read, "Look up quotes or passages about farmers." Here is what I found within the red hard backed binding of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary:

**farm-er** **1.** *a person who farms; person who operates a farm or cultivates land.* **2.** *an unsophisticated person from a rural area; yokel.* **3.** *a person who undertakes some service, as the care of children or the poor, at a fixed price.* **4.** *a person who undertakes the collection of taxes, duties, etc. a. paying a fixed sum for the privilege of retaining them.* **5.** *Cards. a. a variety of twenty-one played with a 45- card pack, the object being to obtain cards having a total worth of 16. b. the dealer in this game.*

If I took Mr. Webster on a little tour through the vineyard to witness first hand the scientific manner in which we farm wine grapes today, he might be inclined to add another line to the definition of farm-er. Although expressing this in only one sentence would be impossible. Each of our estate vineyards has its own timetable and flavors that are expressed at that particular unique and individual site. For instance, our coastal vineyards which are in very close proximity to one another, are drastically subjected in different ways to the varying terms of Mother Nature. I will use the Sonoma Coast as an example. Between

my parents vineyards, Lee and Carolyn Martinelli, and the vineyard sites belonging to John Wetlaufer and Helen Turley, we farm six different designates ranging within one mile of each other on the same ridge. The effect on these close neighboring vineyards by weather patterns can be quite diverse from each other due to their subtle locations on the ridge line, depth of canyons, aspect, wind currents, etc. The varying geography affects the stages of vine development, which can cause one vineyard to mature two weeks later than its neighbor. Wind, temperature and moisture are the critical components for flower set, thus compromising the eventual harvest date. To pinpoint anticipated harvest dates, each individual vine will be examined many times throughout the year to determine development of flowers, timing of berry maturity and verasion, as well as inspecting the leaves for levels of hydration in the plant.

In reading Webster's definition, I wondered how exactly do you spot a yokel? Do they wear overalls? I do know first hand the definition of a farm-er's daughter. You may spot her in overalls once in a while, but don't let those beautiful red Italian shoes that she purchased on her last trip to New York fool you. I live in a vineyard and love every minute of it except the fighting odorous skunks in springtime and the endless dust in summer and the frost alarm screeching in the wee hours of February, March, April and May, and someone always showing up unannounced to check on something like the threat of cutworms or to unload a tractor or adjusting the fertigation system or to pull a tractor out of the mud or to talk about the possibility of rain on Thursday or to stalk deer tracks in the dust or to pick grapes at 4:00 A.M. on a Sunday morning or to stand around examining a 75-year-old septic tank lying beneath the clothesline or to argue how much space the tractor needs to turn around at the end of the row vs. room to plant a lawn in that same space or yahoo! now I can finally get high speed internet or (my favorite part) when a friend asks, "is that a shotgun in the dining room?". Well, Webster missed a couple of things. But really, I wouldn't give it up for anything. In 150 years of being a farming family, overalls or Italian shoes, I love it. Salute.

Julianna Martinelli  
Farmer's Daughter