

# WILLAKENZIE ESTATE

## *What's New at WillaKenzie?*

### **New Wood Tanks**

In 2007 we installed two new wood fermenters at WillaKenzie Estate, emulating the traditional method for wine fermentation in France, although many French wineries now use stainless steel and/or concrete fermentation vessels. Traditional wood fermenters offer different thermal characteristics than stainless steel fermenters. Heat distribution during fermentation is generally more uniform in wood vessels because wood has better insulating properties than stainless steel. Wood also allows for more air exchange between the fermenting wine in the vessel and the outside environment because it is porous. Wood fermenters require a heavier level of maintenance than stainless steel vessels since they can leak more easily and also require more intensive cleaning since bacteria can collect in the wood.

In the past, temperature of the must in the vessel was more difficult to control in a wood fermenter because cooling systems were not readily available. Most modern stainless steel fermenters are built with "jackets" through which glycol can be run at the appropriate temperature. At WillaKenzie Estate, we purchased our wood fermenters from a well-known French cooper and designed cooling coils located inside each vessel, enabling us to control the fermentation temperature using the same glycol fluid that is run through the jackets of the stainless steel fermenters. We also designed a stainless steel frame around the wood tanks so that we can use "little foot" for punch down. As a result, we have combined the best of the old traditional approach, using wood fermenters, with modern technology such as cooling coils and a movable punch down device.



The addition of the wood fermenters is consistent with our philosophy to constantly experiment to achieve our goal of producing the best wines possible. Based on comparative results in the next several years, we will determine if wood fermenters help us improve the quality of the wines we make.



### **Cold Storage Facility**

For a very long time, winemaking in Burgundy has employed the so-called "cold soak" technique. The idea is to cool the must (destemmed or crushed grapes or whole clusters) in a tank before the fermentation process is allowed to start. By keeping the must cold, typically below 50°F, the winemaker prevents the yeast from starting the conversion of sugars to alcohol, while extracting color and flavors in a non-alcoholic environment. The cold soak process can significantly enhance the aromatic profile of the wine, especially for Pinot Noir.

At WillaKenzie Estate, we have consistently used the cold soak technique, and a few years ago we started experimenting with cooling whole grape clusters before processing them. We discovered that if we cool the berries to a temperature between 35° and 45°F before we destem them, we can preserve the integrity of the berries to a much greater extent and further refine the aromatics of the wines. After several years of using refrigerated trucks to cool selected lots of grapes, we decided to build a "Cold Storage Facility" to cool the great majority of our Pinot grapes before we process them.



The new facility is partially buried in the hillside and comprises four cooling cells. Three cells are capable of bringing 20 tons of grapes to 35°F in less than 24 hours, while the fourth cell is capable of reaching 20°F in the same amount of time. This giant (and expensive!) "freezer" with sophisticated controls is another example of our commitment to constantly trying new approaches to make better and better wine every year.

The project was completed on September 18, 2007, in time for the 2007 harvest.