



SPRING 2011

Words from the Winemaker

HI FRIENDS,

When chefs work their magic in the kitchen, they have jars of spices and bunches of herbs, all with wonderful flavors and aromas. And, of course, there are multiple varieties of salts, and so on. Ultimately you get something delicious to eat.

In winemaking, there are many factors to consider as well. One of the first things I think about is the type of grape I want to work with – such as Pinot Grigio, Cabernet Sauvignon, or Merlot. There are also decisions to be made about oak (which country and which forest, or maybe no oak at all), and decisions about fermentation (stainless fermentation vs. barrel fermentation). And then there's another factor I think about – the fermentation-related aromas that I would like to feature in the wine. And now I'm probably on to something you haven't thought much (at all?) about – the lowly, unappreciated little bug called "wine yeast"!

Yeast metabolizes the sugar in the must (the juice from grapes or other fruit) into alcohol. It is naturally present on grapes and in the air. Some winemakers use wild yeast for their fermentation. It's referred to as a natural or spontaneous fermentation. In some instances, it produces flavors and aromas that are unique to the vineyard (read up on RockPile). Spontaneous fermentations, however, are not without risk. The main problem with this practice is that it is unpredictable – you never know if the must will ferment to dryness (no residual sugar), how long it will take, or what stinky compounds you may get in the wine. This is why I stick with commercially available yeast strains.



Each yeast strain produces very special chemical compounds as they metabolize sugar and other organic components of the wine must into sensory properties such as aroma and mouthfeel. Some release more glycerol which results in a heavier mouthfeel and a sense of richness or sweetness. Others release more esters for aromas such as spiciness or expressions of terpenes (now there's an interesting word to look up!).

So how do I choose the yeast strain I want to use for a particular wine varietal?

Quite simply, it comes down to research and experimentation.

At the Middle Ridge Winery Innovation Lab, I have several 6-gallon glass carboys. I divide the must (grape or other fruit juice) between several carboys and use a different yeast strain in each one. Then I play and watch and taste to see what the different strains do to the fruit. In one case, I had 6 different

carboys going – I tested three yeast strains at different pH levels. The results were so good that the next year I did something similar with 2 tons of grapes, blended the batches, and produced an award-winning wine! And now you know why friends call me the Mad Scientist of Idyllwild!

If all this tinkering and chemistry sounds like fun, then it's time to try your hand at being a home winemaker! You've gotta start somewhere, right? Give me a quick call or an email, and I'll help guide you to the right places to buy the stuff for your spice box and get you started!

Until we meet again,
Good Health, Good
Drink, Good Times

Chris Johnston
Winemaker & Bottle Washer



IDYLLWILD

Wine in the Pines



Middle Ridge wines available at:

Middle Ridge Winery at
The Collective
28544 Front Street
Temecula, CA

In Idyllwild at:
Selected Restaurants,
Idyll Awhile Wine
Shoppe & Bistro, and
Mountain Top Liquor Store

Online:
www.middleridge.com

INLAND EMPIRE MAGAZINE ANNUAL WINE AWARDS

2007 Tahquitz
Temecula Valley



If you like a lighter, soft red wine, you'll love our 2007 Tahquitz. Named after a legendary rock outcropping in Idyllwild, where Middle Ridge Winery was started, this wine is dry but full of fruit aromas and tastes. In fact, winemaker Chris describes it as juicy-squishy! You can't miss the bright red cherry aromas and flavors. There's also a touch of strawberry and hints of earth and spice that are the result of aging in 100% French oak for 14 months. Tahquitz is great alone or with food. For appetizers, try it with Asiago cheese and sliced baguettes. For the main course, pair this wine with barbeque chicken, cannelloni with ricotta, or braised ham and melon.

\$26/bottle Production: 50 cases

Note: Very low inventory of this wine. If it is sold out, try our 2008 Tahquitz before it's gone, too!

2007 Meritage
Temecula Valley



Red Meritage wine, a blend of Bordeaux varietals, is known for its smooth, silky texture. Made mostly of Merlot, this Middle Ridge Meritage is especially smooth. The combination of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot give it a complex, robust structure. Rich aromas of black cherries and blackberries abound, accented by hints of spice and tobacco. As the wine opens up, a touch of vanilla and licorice unfold. On the tip of the tongue, you'll notice a sweetness that comes from aging in a combination of French and American oak for 19 months. Enjoy this wine with steak, grilled pork chops, barbecue chicken, or veal chops with mushrooms. It even goes great with pizza!

\$32/bottle Production: 75 cases

Come taste Middle Ridge wines at
The Collective wine bar in
Old Town Temecula,
which serves as our tasting room,
and special events in Idyllwild.



The Collective
28544 Old Town Front Street
Temecula, CA 92590



www.middleridge.com

CAN YOU SAY "WOW!"



Wine meets nature in beautiful and unique works of art created by floral designer and Idyllwild resident Edith Brix. Edith has a great passion for everything natural and uses rocks, branches, and moss in her arrangements along with other items she discovers during her walks on the hills and trails of Idyllwild.

It all began in Denmark where Edith was born. She spent part of her childhood helping out in her father's flower shop located on the town square. Her interest in flowers continued as she went on to a 3 1/2 year education in the knowledge, presentation, and arrangement of flowers and the skills of running a business. After moving to Idyllwild three years ago, Edith

started developing her knowledge of native plants, especially edible plants which she uses in cooking and floral arrangements.

Need a truly unique wine gift? Contact us at winetalk@middleridge.com, and Edith will work with you to create a one-of-a-kind gift that's sure to get a "Wow!"

