



Fromm Winery La Strada – Vintage Report 2005

The growing season

Unlike the previous two seasons, spring 2004 was remarkably normal with no major frost in the region. Bud burst was slightly later than average, temperatures slightly lower, growth moderate to low, in fact the vineyards looked balanced and positively restrained. Flowering in early December was largely influenced by changeable weather with occasional rain and cold spells, resulting in uneven fruit-set in some blocks, depending on the actual time of flowering of each variety or even clone.

On December 16th we had the first substantial rain, followed by a prolonged period of cold, wet weather which lasted until the 11th of January. Then Summer arrived. In the following two months we were blessed with mainly hot, dry days, mild nights and not much wind. This was the time which shaped and made the vintage, particularly the later varieties Merlot, Malbec and Syrah. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were also looking very good; however a short rainy period just before harvest required careful monitoring of the fruit and precise timing for picking.

Riesling and the later red varieties benefited from a relative stable April and all were harvested at optimum ripeness, but not without a special effort. About half of the Reserve Syrah and some of the Malbec were carefully destemmed by hand as many of the bunches contained small green berries which could not be separated by machine.

On Sunday, April 24th we picked our last Malbec grapes. The following night we had a massive -4°C frost. Within 2 days, all leaves in our vineyards turned brown, depriving us of the usually beautiful autumn colours, but thankfully harvest was finished.

The Wines

The first impressions are very positive. The malic acids are lower than in previous years while still maintaining a good pH, and the flavours are ripe. Pinot Noir and Chardonnay seem of very sound quality and show signs of developing into well structured and generous wines. The Rieslings once again are clean, crisp and beautifully balanced.

Of the later varieties the Merlot looks excellent. Ripe und concentrated yet elegant, it has all the hallmarks of a Reserve wine. So does the Malbec but sadly the crops are down by about 70% due to a very bad fruit-set.

The high proportion of whole hand-destemmed berries in the Syrah resulted in a slow fermentation which finished after pressing in barrels. The wine shows an intriguing aromatic, influenced by partial "maceration carbonique" and some co-fermented Viognier.

Lastly, after several years of producing a dry Gewürztraminer with the unavoidable side effect of relatively high alcohol, we picked this year's Gewürztraminer very late. The aim was to maximise flavour concentration and reduce the alcohol by retaining residual sweetness. While writing these notes, the wine is still fermenting, filling the air around its small tank with a penetrating perfume scent.

2005 is certainly a good vintage with some exciting highlights. The only real disappointment the dismally low crop of Malbec in a year where the quality is exceptional.