

The winemaker's process: An interview with Herb Quady

BY DEBBIE TOLLEFSON

Herb Quady grew up on his family's winery in central California, which specializes in sweet and aperitif wines, with a "compulsory" love for muscat. But after a chance exposure to the world of Rhone varieties through Randall Graham, founder of Bonny Doon Vineyard in California, he got hooked on making table wines. After completing a viticulture and enology degree at California State University-Fresno, he found his way to southern Oregon. While working as the winemaker at Troon Vineyard, Herb and his wife, Meloney, founded Quady North in 2006.

We asked Herb a variety of questions about wine, including the effects of climate change on grapes. Here are his answers.

When do you start developing a plan for a particular wine you are going to make? After the grapes are picked or before?

Ideally, we want to start developing the plan very early. After spending a few vintages in the Applegate, I had made some observations that I could use to develop my vineyard. I used trellis systems and orientation in order to grow fruit that would make wine in a particular style. That was a great way to go. However, there have been a few times when we've come up with a plan as the fruit was heading to the winery. That stuff happens, and you just have to roll with it.

If your plan evolves, what information do you use for development of a particular wine? What information affects the final outcome?

I like to talk a lot to different people who work out in the marketplace. My most popular wine was first made at the suggestion of what was then my Portland area representative. He thought he could sell a reasonably priced alternative white from Rhone grape varieties. From that suggestion, I tried to imagine what people might like in a white wine, in a general sense. From my experience, people seem to really gravitate toward bright, balanced, fruit-driven white wines, no matter the variety. That meant picking grapes on the earlier side to retain acidity, fermenting in stainless to emphasize the fruit, fermenting cold to retain aromatics, and bottling early to capture esters. [Description of "esters" from Wikipedia: "Some of the aromas

perceived in wine are from esters created by the reaction of acids and alcohol in the wine."]

Do you use the same general plan year to year or does it change?

We make both terroir-driven wines and concept-driven wines. With a terroir-driven wine, we want the wine to show the character of the place and the vintage, so we try to keep the wine making as simple and consistent as possible. This is how we make our single-vineyard varietal wines. With concept wines, like our Rosé and Pistoleta, we adjust the plan in order to stay true to the concept so that the wine stays consistent from year to year.

You grew up in the wine business, so how has your wine style evolved from earlier wines or wines that your family made?

When I first moved to southern Oregon in 2003, I had a sort of "California-esque" mentality. I had learned that vines needed to be stressed in order to produce wines of concentration. I didn't realize that our area has a lot of natural stresses: cold winters, shallow soils, low-nutrient soils, and dry, arid summers. This is different from most parts of California. I changed pretty quickly to focus more on vine health after observing that the best wines in the cellar came from the most balanced, healthy vines. My family in California specializes in dessert and aperitif wines, which is a unique specialty. However, making sweet wines is all about balance. You have to balance sweetness with acidity; otherwise the wine is cloying. In table wines, even though the wine might not have any residual sugar, you still need to pay attention to balance. In this case, the sweetness comes from fruit and oak, while the drying effects come from tannin and acid. These need to be kept in balance for a table wine to be enjoyable.

You have been doing this a long time. What still excites you about creating a wine? Is there a particular variety of grape or blend that you are looking forward to creating?

One thing that's exciting for me is selling my fruit to other talented winemakers. The more winemakers we can get excited about southern Oregon fruit, the better. It's really fun to see what they do

with it. Even though it's not particularly a great business strategy, I love experimenting with different varieties or wine styles. Lately we've had a lot of fun making sparkling wines. The whole reason to do this is for the fun and challenge of creating. If we stop letting ourselves have fun, it's not worth it.

What is your insight about climate change and the Applegate Valley?

This is a great question. I've only been here for 13 years, so some of my understanding comes from the growers who have been here longer than that. I know that a lot of the older vineyards were established without irrigation because there was more rain during the summer. In my first few vintages, I had to become an expert on deacidulation because our acids were much higher than they are now. I think this is because even in "warm" vintages, like 2004, night temperatures were cooler than they had been in recent vintages; hence, acid wasn't respiring as quickly as it is now.

The years from 2012 to 2016 were very warm and characterized by early bud break, which made vines more susceptible to spring frost, which continues to be an issue in the valley despite the warming weather.

It's really hard to say what this means for growing wine grapes in the valley. Wine grapes can perform well in a relatively broad range of temperatures. What changes is the style of wine that's made from them. I tried some beautiful old merlots made from the Layne Vineyard in the 1980s, and what



Herb Quady, owner and winemaker at Quady North, grew up in central California with a "compulsory" love for muscat.

struck me was how delicate they were at 12.5 percent alcohol, which is reminiscent of older Bordeaux wines. These days, that same fruit makes a lovely, but much richer, red wine, which usually finishes in the upper 14 percent range. The changing climate certainly allows us to keep pushing the envelope. We certainly wouldn't have considered grenache and tannat to be good bets a decade ago, but now they make solid wines every year.

What is scary is the unpredictability. In other regions of the wine world, especially in Europe, they have been experiencing very extreme weather events like frost and hail during the growing season. California, as we know, has just emerged from a serious drought. For us, it could be more forest fires, spring frost, and drought that could prove to be serious challenges.

Debbie Tollefson

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The Quady North tasting room is located at 255 East California Street in Jacksonville. For more information, call 541-702-2123, email info@quadynorth.com, or visit their website at quadynorth.com.

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Hope Harrison, choir director for Voices of the Applegate, offered a summer session of singing with choir members and anyone who might be interested in getting together once a week to sing during the months of July and August. We had a great turnout and enjoyed a variety of songs, including "I Will Sing My Song," "The Bare Necessities," and "Sixteen Tons" in two-part harmony, as well as a wide range of music from the handbook, *Get America Singing Again*, which contains about 50 of the favorite American songs we learned in school. Our grand finale was to sing in local nursing homes.

Our regular fall rehearsal session will begin on Wednesday, September 6, and we will rehearse every Wednesday evening until November 15. Our concerts will be held on Friday, December 1, at 7 pm at the Old Presbyterian Church, 405 East California Street, Jacksonville, and Sunday, December 3, at 3 pm, at Applegate River Lodge, 15100 Highway 238, Applegate.

For more information, call Joan Peterson at 541-846-6988.