

Lake Chelan Winery

Manson, WA

Devon Griffith
Summer 2015

Introduction

Located in Manson, Washington, Lake Chelan Winery holds the prestigious title of being the first winery of the Lake Chelan Valley. The ground breaking efforts of its owners, the Kludt family, which have been my family's neighbors for over 40 years, brought about the first steps in creating the foundation of the wine industry here in the valley, and with this leading to its recognition as an American Viticulture Area in 2009. Having shared my aspirations of becoming apart of the industry myself with the Kludt's, they offered me my internship position under the direction of their winemaker Ray Sandidge for the summer of 2015. With it I planned to gain the knowledge and experience needed for me to help pursue and make the dreams of mine a reality.



Early morning sunrise over the vineyard while shoot thinning



The Dry Lake Vineyard of Manson, where we conducted crop indexing on Merlot and Malbec varietals



Organizing empty barrels after a blend creation to undergo gassing with SO₂ before storage



Apple press in full operation at the cider facility



Running a filtration and cleaning/sanitizing barrels

Responsibilities

The responsibilities I held as an mentee and employee covered a wide variety of tasks and duties on a day to day basis. In the vineyard setting I performed the task of removing undesired shoots with the vineyard crews in the shoot thinning process to aid in canopy management, an imperative factor for the final wine quality from the fruit produced from the vines. I also aided the winemaker Ray in the crop indexing procedure. Where analysis and recording of cluster size and number through selected rows in the vineyard blocks brought about estimates for tonnage per acre for the vines. This in turn dictated if fruit removal was needed to achieve the desirable levels of fruit the winemaker wanted per acre for harvest. Through my experience and in asking questions during my time in the vineyards I learned a great deal on the importance viticulture plays for the overall quality of the wine itself. As Ray told me, 75% of the wine quality is dictated in the vineyard, with the remaining 25% being in the cellar practices. In the cellar I would work along side the winemaker and cellar master in the production processes both for wine and hard cider. Lake Chelan Winery produces and bottles their hard cider label, Washington Gold Cider, on a year round production plan. With this I spent a great deal of time learning and executing the procedures needed in its production. These included operating the press, working the crush pad processing cherries through the grape press for the cherry cider, hauling the apple and cherry pomace to the compost pile with the old GMC flat bed truck, setting up and executing filtrations, cleaning and sanitizing all tanks and equipment, loading pallets of cases and kegs onto trucks for shipment, as well as bottling. In the wine production side of the winery, I performed many tasks similar to the cider production such as with the sanitation methods and bottling. I also performed tasks such as pH adjustment to wines through malic acid additions, bentonite and egg white fining adds, running SO₂ and pH tests on samples in the lab, participating in blending trials and blend creation, and the handling and cleaning of barrels during and after their use in wine aging and storage. During the weekends I would also operate the wine bar located in the BBQ restaurant on the winery premises, learning the marketing, pouring/tasting, and customer relations side of the business.



Operating the crush pad in July pressing cherries for the cherry cider

Summary

In the last few months that I have worked at Lake Chelan Winery for the Kludt family under the direction of Ray Sandidge, I have gained much more than I ever could have anticipated. To fully immersed myself in a winery operation as successful as theirs, working the long hours and performing the wide variety of tasks to create the quality wines and cider they produce has enriched my life and bolstered my knowledge of the wine grape growing, wine/hard cider producing, and wine/hard cider sales of the industry. Overall this experience has been an amazing one to say the least, and I can say with full confidence that what I have gained from it in the form of knowledge and hands on application will be something I carry with me for the rest of my life. Someday when the opportunity comes for me to become a viticulturalist and winemaker myself, it will be these experiences from this internship that will act as the foundation from which I can build my success upon.



Manning the wine bar for the 4th of July Fireworks Auction in the barrel room