

Four Feathers Wine Estates/Zirkle Fruit Co.

Prosser, Washington

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Fall 2015



Above: 32,000 gallon red fermenters sit outside. Along with the new kosher facility, these are the latest additions to Four Feathers Wine Estates.



Introduction

Four Feathers Wine Estates is a family-owned winery located in Prosser, Washington. The newly built custom crush facility crushed over 15,000 tons this harvest for several clients including The Hogue Cellars, Chateau Ste. Michelle and Columbia Crest. The team consists of skilled and experienced winemakers David Forsyth and Frederique Spencer, a proficient cellar crew and a state-of-the art lab. I worked under my mentor Erubiel Clara who is a seasoned Cellar Master as well as Victor Palomera who is head of Press Operations.

Responsibilities

My everyday duties ranged from receiving and dumping grapes into the press hopper to shipping out kosher cider. I had the privilege to work with both cellar and press crews and also had the opportunity to work with traveling winemakers from Ste. Michelle and The Hogue Cellars. I had to perform all aspects of seasonal harvest-related work like: cap management, pump-overs with Francesca pumps and Pulsair Systems, Juice/wine transfers, additions and inoculations, operating crush equipment, press operations as well as maintaining a sanitized and clean winery.

Summary

This experience has encouraged my professional growth by increasing my ability for life-long learning. It has also improved my knowledge of current viticulture and enology issues. This internship showed me the impact that agriculture has had on my local economy as well as job opportunities for young people like myself. During this internship I learned to use the appropriate techniques, skills and knowledge in order to produce wines of the highest quality.



Above: My mentor and Cellar Master, Erubiel Clara shows how to properly rack wine off of cold-settled lees. Depending on the client, white wines are usually cold settled 48 to 72 hours. From there they are racked through a heat exchange in order to prepare for inoculation.



Above: Using a centrifugal pump to fill polar and pup with finished wine. First the head space must be gassed with CO₂ and N₂ to a dissolved oxygen (D.O.) reading of less than 1.0 mg/L. Then SO₂ is added to prevent the wine from any further fermentation. Most shipped wine was headed to Woodinville, WA and all kosher cider was shipped to Colfax, CA for Crispin Hard Cider.

Left: The “brontosaurus” comes out at sunrise. With trucks showing up to the press hopper at 4 am, most red fermenters cannot be dug out until sunrise. Red fermenters are dug out by a team of three and while bins are filled with pomace, a forklift driver dumps the bins into the “brontosaurus” (incline conveyor). From there the pomace is transported and dropped into the press door. A light press is done for five phases, while the hard press only lasts for one.



Below: Merlot, merlot. Two drain and presses being simultaneously drained. Four Feathers Wine Estates utilized whole berry fermentation or carbonic maceration, so berries are not immediately pressed, but instead added directly to the fermenter. Once a cap is formed from the grapes, the juice is drained and the pomace is dug out and put into the press.