

Youngberg Hill Vineyards – David White (Terroirist) Q & A Interview

Wayne Bailey – Owner/Grower

4/1/14

1. What is your general winemaking philosophy? Unmanipulating. My desire is to grow the best grapes possible in that season on each section of the vineyard; and that the wine in each glass reflects where the fruit was grown and the weather it was grown in. I do not try to make the wine taste a certain way or have certain characteristics, only to aid it in being the best it can be. Like raising children; you can't make a rocket scientist out of a child with skills of a music teacher. As a parent, you help them by giving them the tools and providing an environment that allows them to be the best music teacher they can be.

2. What's open in your kitchen right now? A bottle of Syrah from Abeja in Washington. I think Washington is growing some great Syrah right now, better than CA. I enjoy other wine varietals, particularly Syrah and Syrah blends because they reflect similar qualities to Pinot.

3. Who are your favorite winemakers in history, through personal account, or their wines? Andre Tchelistcheff, because of the work he did in CA and his approach toward winemaking (focusing on farming and fruit quality). Rob Davis of Jordan Vineyards is another. Rob, who is a disciple of Andre, has been at Jordan forever and has continued over the years to consistently make great wine. Who stays at the same winery for 35 years? And David Lett, for having the vision and the fortitude to try something, that at the time, seemed crazy. Again, David focused on growing grapes and it was always the cornerstone of his winemaking.

4. What new winemakers are you most excited about, and why? Other than myself??? There are so many. I am excited about all the women winemakers out there. First, they are better to look at. ☺ Seriously, I think they have a sensitivity to winemaking and growing the grape that most of us do not have.

5. How do you spend your days off? I'm a farmer! What is a day off? ☺ I try to get out and barrel taste with my neighbors, check out new wineries, visit with other growers, and visit with wine tasting guests.

6. What's the best wine you've ever tasted? The most interesting? I don't know if it is the best wine I have ever tasted or the one I remember best, but it was a bottle of Haut Brion in 1975 when I was on a recruiting trip my senior year in college. My uncle took me to dinner and ordered it. Up to that point the only wine I had experienced was probably MD 2020 or Gallo. The Haut Brion was like butter. The most interesting was a bottle of Burgundy that I took from a milk crate next to a mail box along the road that I paid for by leaving the money in the mailbox. It was made by the farmer at the end of that driveway who was a 5th generation farmer of a small family section of grapes, making only about 125 cases in his cave. It was the perfect experience of terroir.

7. **What's the oldest bottle in your cellar?** The most expensive? My oldest bottle is a 1995 of Chateau Haut Brion. It's probably around \$400. I'm a drinker, not a collector.

8. **If you had to pick one red and one white to drink for the next month with every dinner, what would you choose?** Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, in both cases they are the most versatile and complementary when pairing with foods.

9. **What's your biggest challenge as a winemaker?** Keeping your hands off, particularly when there is something going on. Experience tells you that the sooner you respond, the better chance of saving the wine. However, experience also tells you that in many, if not most cases, having patience for the wine to evolve usually is the best nonaction.

10. **What's your favorite wine region in the world -- other than your own?** Bourgogne.

11. **Is beer ever better than wine?** I would not say better than wine, but sometimes beer is more refreshing than wine. As we say in the industry, it takes a lot of good beer to make good wine.

12. **What would people be surprised to know about you?** That I grew up on a small farm in Iowa and that this is my 5th career.

13. **If you weren't making wine for a living, what would you be doing?** I would be consulting, my 4th career.

14. **How do you define success?** Make the best wine possible that reflects where the grapes were grown and the weather of that season they were grown in, and that the vineyard and vines are healthier 50 years from now for my family than they are today. That is sustainability.