

NIWG RESEARCH VINEYARD, 2007

October 12th marked the day of NIWG's last variety to pick from the Research Vineyard- the Ventura (Elvira x Chelois cross, developed in Ontario) was ready.

Even though it hung very late, there was very little degradation of the fruit. In fact, many of the cluster stems hadn't hardened off. Clusters in shaded parts were less than totally ripe-those hanging in leaf -pulled areas had a nice, golden, translucent hue. Another two weeks of nice weather might have helped, but we didn't want to shoot for ice wine!

The ripe grapes were at/about 23 brix, the ones in the shade were at/ about 18. This is definitely a grape for a longer growing season. It should do well in central or southern Illinois.(Last year, it wasn't even close to ripe, so we counted and weighed clusters on about 3 vines and left the rest for the critters.)

Gerry, Ed, Ray and Jim Rasmussen, a Galena Cellars suite guest with, evidently, not much to do that morning helped de-net and harvest today.

The harvest yield averaged 17.5 pounds per vine (suggesting it was over-cropped) for 11 vines, or about 188 # total, which gave us about 14 gallons of juice after the crush and pressing. Brix was actually a bit high for a white- 22.5 (12.2% alcohol potential) and TA=1.01, pH= 3.1.

The juice has a lot of promise, and will be racked the day after the press (10/13) and Ed & Gerry will pitch the 71B yeast at that time.

Gerry Podraza (Apple River, IL) will be making the wine, and plans to do half as a still wine, and will experiment on making a sparkling wine from the rest. (He, a new winemaker, doesn't realize all the labor involved when making sparkling wine via the methode champenois !).

Thanks to Chris Lawlor and Galena Cellars for their assistance in 2007; thanks to Patrick Perquette, Chris' new assistant, for running the pH and TA analyses; thanks to our many volunteers (Ed, our part time vineyard manager, Greg Junge, Bob Peterson, Gerry and Jenna Podraza, Scott Price, Brad Beam, Sue and Bill Ertmer, Bob Hall) this year, for helping prune, leaf-thin, net, harvest and make the various wines.

Ray Ruthenberg, all-around volunteer.

PS. The first annual NIWG post-harvest wine dinner (Sept. 26th) was well-attended, and Galena's Fried Green Tomatoes restaurant served an excellent dinner. The reception included a sparkling wine (Galena Cellars) and several wines made from the research vineyard grapes: LaCrescent, Leon Millot, Foch, Edelweiss and Pinard. Massbach Ridge's Foch Rose was served with the salad, and her St. Pepin accompanied the salmon; Galena Cellar's Frontenac or Foch were served with the Filet Mignon and, finally, Galena Cellars' Frontenac port helped the chocolate based dessert slide down quite well!