

DAMAS VINEYARDS WINE CLUB NEWS DECEMBER 2017



It's that time of year again—Olive Harvest!

It was a bodacious harvest--almost 2 tons of olives from about 95 trees. You might think there would be economies of scale, but you'd be wrong. We pay our hired workers by the hour to handpick our olives (and milling is flat rate per ton). This year we had twenty pickers working hard, from 7 am until just after 4 pm, with a break for homemade *pozole* around noon.

Then, we had to finish packing up and preparing the honkin' big rental truck for the long trip to Hollister early next morning. We wish there were an olive mill in Amador County, but there is not—despite the fact that more and more people are cultivating interesting olive varieties. There is growing interest, so maybe next year...

Deborah and I left for the mill before 7 am the morning after harvest, and we did not return home until 9:30 pm. The road trip was the same as usual, and we arrived at the mill in good time for our 11 am appointment. However, the customer before us had shown up with three tons of olives, instead of the single ton they said they would be bringing. So, we had to wait a few hours before they could even begin milling ours. We had never driven more than one ton of olives to this mill ourselves, so of course our 3,700 pounds took longer than usual to work their way through the washer, blower, stone wheels, malaxers, and centrifuge, to stream out the other end of the system as gorgeous spicy *olio nuovo*--as the Italians call newly milled, bright green olive oil. We left Hollister with over 80 gallons of this liquid gold!

By the time we got to Lodi, where we had to drop off the rental truck and transfer our empty olive bins and numerous 5-gallon containers of olive oil (and tie-downs, tools, etc.) into the pickup we had left there early in the morning, it was getting dark and had started to rain. We found some bright lights outside a commercial gym. We parked there and started our unloading work, gazing longingly through an open side door at the numerous young adults blowing off excess energy by leaping, dancing and throwing basketballs at hoops (*sigh*). It seemed a long drive home. We rolled the pickup into the garage in a steady rain, detached the trailer full of empty bins, and closed the door so we could go have a glass of wine and a snack, and leave the unpacking for the morrow.



We've recovered by now, but find ourselves with a whole lot of beautiful extra virgin olive oil. The one complaint we've had in recent years is that our 375 ml bottles run out too fast, so this year we ordered a bunch of 500 ml bottles and redesigned our label to be handsome and contemporary. We still have a couple of cases of the 375 ml bottles, and some empty 750 ml wine bottles, so we're offering a range of size options and prices. We'll be bottling over the next few days, so please let us know as soon as you can if you think you would like to buy oil for yourselves or for holiday gift giving. And of course we have wine, as well, for your holiday festivities. Happy Holidays, ready or not!

Thank you to all who purchased wine and olive oil in November to help us support recovery efforts from the wildfires in Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake Counties. We donated 25% of the proceeds from those sales to RebuildWineCountry.org to help rebuild affordable housing.