

DAMAS VINEYARDS WINE CLUB NEWSLETTER

October 2017

There is nothing like the smell and feel of the first rain of the season in the Sierra foothills, especially after a long, hot, dusty summer. This year, in particular, it was desperately welcome, with all of the devastating wild fires blazing, even in urban areas unaccustomed to such threats.



We were fortunate once again to avoid fire damage or evacuation concerns at our vineyard property in Fiddletown--or even the kind of air quality impacts experienced in the Bay Area. We were in San Francisco for several of those days. It was intense, not only because of the irritated eyes and coughing, but also the knowledge of just what was burning further north to cause that smothering smoke—wedding albums, homes, community centers, peoples’ lives. We want to do something to help, and you can help too. We’re pledging to donate 25 percent of all Damas Club wine and olive oil sales through November 15 to the fire

recovery efforts in northern California. Specifically, we plan to donate this money to Habitat for Humanity Sonoma County, which is working in conjunction with a group called Rebuild Wine Country. Funds donated to this cause will go 100 percent to helping low income families repair and rebuild their homes lost to the recent wildfires. <https://www.rebuildwinecountry.org/>

DAMAS Update: We harvested 6.3 tons of Zinfandel on September 14 and delivered it to Renwood Winery, where they appeared to be inundated with grapes. They took in and crushed almost one hundred tons of Zinfandel alone over a 2-day period! It seemed that many vineyards in our area all ripened at the same time this year, making it more challenging than ever to find picking labor.

Most people think that nothing much happens in the vineyard after harvest – not true! After harvest, our vines got a long, deep watering. Then we “hedged” the vine rows, which means manually cutting back canes just enough to allow the tractor to pass through without doing too much damage. We waited to mulch the cuttings until after the first rain, to control dust. We also ‘fertigated’—pumping a soup of micronutrients through the drip irrigation system to give the vines a last nutritious meal as the roots store energy for the long winter and vigorous spring ahead. Next, we will till every other row in the vineyard (to leave beneficial insect habitat in the odd rows undisturbed). After that, we’ll apply a couple of tons of compost, then seed the vineyard with a cover crop of rye, vetch and legumes, to supply nitrogen and organic matter. It’s a busy time, as all of this needs to be completed before it gets too cold for the cover crop to germinate.

Meanwhile, other crops continue to ripen. We’ve been harvesting pears, apples, pomegranates and jujubes. Now we are gathering the walnuts that always rain down from the trees after the cool nights and first sprinkles crack their husks open. We are keeping close watch on the olive trees, as the crop begins to mature. We always look forward to our spicy, sassy “Olio Nuevo,” but the oil from last year’s milling is delicious now too. It has mellowed and become more buttery, and will still be good for another year. *Bon appetit!*

