



2006 WILLAMETTE VALLEY TF

BACKGROUND We fell in love with the Tocai Friulano grape variety in 1996 when we were visiting several wine regions in Europe with the architect of our new winery. After time in Burgundy, we wanted to know more about Italian white wine technology, so we visited numerous wineries in Alto Adige and Friuli regions of northeastern Italy. Though bottles of Tocai Friulano are somewhat rare in the US, this grape is the most widely planted variety in Friuli. It has nothing to do the Tokaj region of Hungary (which produces sweet dessert wines) and, in fact, the Italians are no longer allowed to use “Tocai” on their labels as of March 30, 2007. They will use “Friulano” as the official name of the wine. In 1977, Oregon’s label regulations set out to avoid references to European places on Oregon labels. Since both “Tocai” and “Friulano” are such references, we decided to honor the spirit of Oregon’s regs by calling our wine just “TF.”

GROWING SEASON Although storms carrying a lot of rain swept through Oregon in mid-January, slowing up pruning work, by the time spring rolled around the 2006 growing season had caught up to what we assume to be “normal” timing in this day and age. Bud break occurred in the third week of March, and bloom about the second week of June. Perfect bloom weather resulted in too many clusters, each with too many berries. Thus, we had to spend a significant amount of time in “green harvest” passes to pare back the crop to what our climate could actually ripen. Harvest was accomplished in near perfect weather, warm enough that everything ripened smoothly, yet not all at once, with cool mornings for picking and very little rain.

VINEYARDS Since this grape is a member of the Sauvignon family, and therefore somewhat later ripening, we looked to warmer sites for siting. First, in 1988, we grafted over 3¼ acres of the vineyard that we lease from our friends Del and Jesse Ellis, which is located near the eastern end of the Chehalem Mountains, on volcanic soils at about the 550 foot elevation. It took us several years to learn a critical winemaking step, so our first vintage from these grapes was 2002. More recently, we grafted over a 1.4-acre block of Ribbon Springs Vineyard (in the Ribbon Ridge AVA) in 2005, and picked our first grapes from that block on October 7, 2006. The Ellis was picked on Oct. 12.

WINEMAKING The incredible fruitiness and spice of Tocai grapes are carried in a layer attached under the skin. Much of that flavor is lost if we follow our normal regime of simply pressing the grapes as whole clusters and sending the resulting juice immediately to tank. The critical winemaking step comes after the initial pressing, when winemaker Dave Paige pumps the juice back over the lightly pressed grapes. The natural enzymes in the juice help break down that flavor layer still in the skins. After about half an hour, the juice has enough flavor and goes to tank. In those stainless steel tanks, the juice is inoculated with a commercial yeast to insure a slow, cool fermentation. This year, malolactic fermentation was totally blocked to preserve all the fresh fruitiness of the wine. The final blend is 80% from Ribbon Springs Vineyard and 20% from Ellis Vineyard. The 2006 “TF” was bottled on May 1, 2007.

THE WINE It is great fun to compare our “TF” with its Old World counterparts. The aromas of the two are similar, but ours is somewhat more in the direction of lime, kiwi, and guava, and a little less about new-mown hay. In the mouth, ours seems richer, rounder and fruitier without being sweet; Friulian bottlings are usually more earthy and tannic. As for pairings, shellfish of any sort would be the traditional partner, but our “TF” also seems to be wonderful with full-flavored, semi-hard cheeses, real Italian Fontina, for example .

THE LABEL This wine belongs to our series of relatively rare wines, officially (and lovingly) designated as “Wacky”, since they are not what one expects from a Willamette Valley winery. We use the same Ginny Adelsheim drawing for all of them, a “portrait” of our winery as seen from a hill in our Calkins Lane estate vineyard.



PRODUCTION There were 342 cases of the 2006 Willamette Valley TF produced.