



CRAWFORD BECK

VINEYARD

Musings

June 15, 2007

Jeanne and I have been sitting outside, drinking a glass of burgundy, yup, basic burgundy, watching the grapes grow. It is now 9:15 PM and the light is just beginning to fail (we are enough further north from Philadelphia that the evenings last a bit longer). I can actually work in the vineyard until 9:30 pm or so.

We were in the vineyard a little while ago and saw a sweet event, bloom. There are four basic milestones in the life of a vineyard: bud break (about which we wrote a while ago), bloom (which determines the maximal amount of fruit that we can get), véraison, and the vendage. We will write more about the last two later. Today we saw BLOOM. You can see from the attached pictures how unprepossessing the grape flowers are. They are a “perfect” flower, which means that they fertilize themselves, they have no smell, at least none that I can detect, and are so small that you have to look really closely to see them. But bloom we have.

Now comes the big problem. Grapes do not bloom all at once. One flower results in one berry. A bunch of flowers result in a bunch of berries. The berries ripen in a set time period from the fertilization, which can happen only after the flower blooms.....now you see the problem. A staggered bloom means a staggered ripening. Who wants a bunch of grapes with some ripe and some still lagging behind? What can I do about it???? Nothing but pray for a spate of very warm weather to speed up the laggard flowers. Did I never mention that the vineyard is at the very cutting edge of Mother Nature’s mercy?

So we revel in the beauty of the farm at 10,000 feet, 1000 feet, and even 10 feet. But get up close, really close, and you will see what a close run thing it really is. Right now, I am wondering how we will ever get a bottle of wine from the hard green little spheres we call flowers.

Today, Jeanne and I spent part of the afternoon consulting on how we will foil the major predators we face, huge flocks of robins, which will descend on us in late August, and peck at our fruit, ruining a whole bunch with a single bite from a single berry. If the birds can be persistent, we can be very clever. We will turn their fears against them, we will ruin their appetites, and we will simply scare them away, all the while, sharing up a little fruit with all comers.

But my glass is empty so I will write more later.