Around New York...

**STATEWIDE - TIM MARTINSON**

As this **Final Issue** of Veraison to Harvest goes to press, the actual harvest continues until at least election day in the Lake Erie region, with one major Concord processor finishing up this Tuesday.

In the Finger Lakes and Lake Erie regions, reported tonnage has run heavy - both with Concord and hybrid/vinifera wine grapes. For example, Rich Erdle of National Grape Cooperative is expecting a Concord crop about 10-20% above the most recent 5 year average of 106,000 tons in the tri-state area. Crop in the Eastern regions was at least average.

When all is said and done, I suspect that instead of the 8% reduction in the New York grape tonnage projected by the New York Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), we will see an increase of several percent over last year’s crop.

A combination of fruitful buds (several Riesling vineyards seemed to have close to 3 clusters per shoot), higher-than-average fruit set, and large berries (due to ample water availability through early August) has conspired to produce more and larger grape clusters than anybody expected.

**LAKE ERIE - JODI CREASAP GEE**

At this point, most of the fruit is off the vines, as are the majority of the leaves. We have had hard freezes and snow; nothing’s getting any riper at this point, so it comes down to logistics for most of the processors and wineries. Concord harvest with at least two of the processors is scheduled to continue

**CHALLENGING BUT REWARDING:**

**Winemaker Impressions of the 2008 Harvest**

Chris Gerling

Enology Extension Associate

“Last year it felt like we were up 10-0 going into harvest,” says Raphael winemaker Rich Olsen-Harbich, “this year we had to come from behind. Still, a win is a win.”

This combination of relief and jubilation was shared by the winemakers I talked to this week when I asked for their thoughts on the vintage.

After a season that began with a May Day freeze and featured wind, rain and a fair amount of hail, the presence of ripe, healthy fruit with good flavors was definitely reason to celebrate.

But exciting flavors with nice numbers were what each vintner reported receiving. Whites, especially aromatic whites, were judged as generally outstanding while early vinifera and hybrid reds are thought to be at least on par with last year. The Bordeaux reds may lack some concentration compared with those produced in 2007’s exceptional conditions, but no one finds them to be disappointing at this point. Winemakers were quick to give credit
than predicted though some vineyards fared better than others. Regardless, many growers picked straight through reds this week. A few blocks will hang into early November. While winemakers are busy inside, vineyard managers are contemplating the season, working on the removal of bird netting and winterizing equipment.

Overall, despite the challenges presented by weather, growers are satisfied with the results of the season. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the industry has learned to handle most of what Mother Nature sends our way. This was a season where vigilance and attention to detail really paid off.

Finger Lakes - Hans Walter-Peterson.

The harvest season in the Finger Lakes has been winding down this week. Except for perhaps a couple of vineyards, only grapes for late harvest and icewines remain hanging at this point.

While we won’t get official estimates on the size of the state’s harvest for several months, I think that it’s safe to say that this year’s crop in the Finger Lakes was above average, and in many cases, well above average. Fortunately this year, this has not translated into poor quality fruit coming to wineries and juice processors. Sugar and flavor development seemed to be well balanced this year, and acidity was more in the range of what winemakers are used to working with, especially when compared to last year.

The other concern that arises with a heavy crop load is winter hardiness. If vines are spending a lot of resources to get a large crop ripe, they are spending less on developing carbohydrates and other compounds needed for adequate winter hardiness and early spring growth next year. In addition, overcropped vines may come back with smaller crops the following year as cluster formation in the buds that will produce next year’s shoots can be adversely affected. On the positive side, however, canopy fill was good in vineyards this year despite the heavier crops thanks to having adequate rainfall during the growing season (sometimes more than adequate). Periderm development also seems to be good in most vineyards, so hopefully this means our vines are well prepared for the coming winter.
to tireless vineyard crews who were often kept jumping by finicky weather and high disease pressure.

In what might be described as a “real” cool climate year, aromatic whites and lighter reds were not surprisingly on most people’s minds. Bob Green, consulting winemaker for many western NY wineries, think this may be the best Riesling he’s seen and Michael Migliore of Whitecliff feels the same way about his Pinot Noir. Jeff Murphy of Johnson Estate thought that some of the whites, especially hybrids, became drought stressed and stopped ripening in 2007, so along with better flavors the sugars were higher this year too.

Making a dramatic and welcome return in 2008 to New York wines: acid. We expect wines that are “vivacious” as Christopher Tracy of Channing Daughters put it, “and this year we got them.” On Long Island the white wines are looking “beautiful,” according to Tracy. Rich Olsen-Harbich is especially excited by his Sauvignon Blanc profile so far.

Finger Lakes Riesling seemed to be perfectly suited to this season, provided you could keep the rot out. Barry Tortolon of Rooster Hill called them “crisp like 2003 but without the acidity problems.” Ann Raffetto of Wagner agreed, saying that she had some acid, but nothing over 10 g/L. Fox Run’s Peter Bell doesn’t want to compare his Riesling to another year, any year, because he is “in ecstasy about the flavors”.

At Sheldrake Point, Dave Breeden said they may have lost some quantity in the vineyard and at the sorting table, but the quality of what’s now in the tank is superb.

The Bordeaux reds range from “possibly better than last year, and I never thought I’d be saying that,” to “more stemmy and leafy than last year at this point.” All in all, most winemakers concede that 2007 was ideal for the Big Reds, but there are lots of positive signs in 2008. Dave Breeden actually prefers what he’s seeing and smelling in his Cabs so far, while Christopher Tracy is excited about what the lower pHs might mean for aging potential. Michael Migliore likes his Noiret this year and Bob Green thinks that the reds have “more character than last year.” Some Long Island and Hudson Valley fruit is still hanging and may stay out for another week or so.

All in all, these winemakers are content, relieved and exhausted. It should be mentioned once more that the contentment and relief would not have been possible without the work that happened in the vineyard.

2008 was a year where a lot of work was needed to keep things clean and healthy. I know this task was not easy or cheap, and is not getting any more so. As far as the winemakers go, the knowledge that the journey was not always smooth has seemed to make these wines a little more distinctive and engaging, and has made them appreciate the vintage all the more. We certainly have a lot to look forward to.
The **Vinification & Brewing Technology Laboratory** is wrapping up harvest number seven in its specially outfitted space in the Food Research Lab in Geneva. This year was relatively light by V&B standards, with closer to 150 wine lots as opposed to around 250 in 2007. With the arrival of Dr. Anna Katherine Mansfield January, we expect this year to be a temporary blip. Dr. Mansfield will be heading the extension research component of the enology & viticulture program. Winemakers **Luann Preston-Wilsey** and **Pam Raes** found the workload to be comfortably steady this year, and credit the excellent planning, communication and cooperation of the faculty, staff and students they worked with for helping things go so smoothly.

The V&B exists to make research wines for projects originating in different departments and locations across the state. Viticultural trials dealing with everything from soils and rootstocks to canopy management passed through the doors in September and October. This year fruit came not just from Long Island to Lake Erie but also the new planting in Willsboro on the shore of Lake Champlain. As always, promising candidates from Dr. Bruce Reisch’s grape breeding program figured largely in the V&B as well.

To make good research wine, the experimental variables have to speak loudly and every other part of the wine needs to clam up. To this end, the “hand” of the winemaker needs to be invisible and all of the heroic activities that people describe breathlessly in glossy magazines must be avoided at all costs. This means even avoiding rescuing wayward lots from all but the most egregious problems. Why do they do it? Because we need to know what happens when cultural practices are ignored or taken too far. We want to know what impact changing one enological technique and nothing else will have. We all are curious about the effects of our actions, and this lab is a place where we can really see what is winemaking lore and what is winemaking fact, if not both.

The V&B is continuing to evolve as the Cornell viticulture and enology program grows. There are more “clients” in the form of faculty, students and staff to work with, and more areas in which to do research. The V&B hopes to meet these new challenges and opportunities while still maintaining the core mission of producing wines that reflect the experiment and nothing else. The half-kidding motto we use is “our wine isn’t always good- it’s always representative.” The goal is that through our trials your wine can always be both.
In *Veraison to Harvest* #2 (p. 7), we explored sampling variability in a well-managed Riesling vineyard (Article posted at: http://blogs.cce.cornell.edu/grapes/files/2008/09/veraison-to-harvest-2008-_2.pdf). Those samples were taken on September 10 - well before they were ripe. We returned to this vineyard on October 21 - 5 weeks later and the day before they were harvested - and repeated the same measurements.

**What we measured:** We sampled 10 riesling clusters from each of 5 vines, choosing 5 ‘exposed’ and 5 ‘shaded’ clusters from each vine. We then individually measured brix, pH, and TA on each of the 50 clusters, which gave us 50 different numbers illustrating how the 5 vines and 10 clusters within these vines varied.

We also collected: 1) a random sample of 100 berries from the same area (25 post lengths in one row) and 2) a sample composed of 25 whole clusters. This was meant to mimic winemaker practice of either collecting ‘berry samples’ or ‘whole cluster’ samples.

**The question:** Would the pre-harvest samples show the same range of variability as the samples taken 5 weeks before harvest? Or would differences narrow as less mature grapes ‘caught up’?

**Results.** As we reported before, the early samples showed a range of 10 - 16.5º brix, pH from 2.8 to 3.3, and TA between 13 and 19 g/liter. Late samples of ripe fruit (lower graph) showed slightly narrower variability in brix (Range: 17 to 21.5º brix), pH (Range 3.05 to 3.3), and TA (Range: 7.5 to 11). Independent berry and cluster samples from Sept 10 (top graph) showed berry samples overestimating maturity (higher brix, pH, lower TA) compared to cluster samples. The late samples (lower graph) showed both berry and clusters correctly estimating average brix (very close); cluster samples better estimating average pH- with berry pH estimate much lower; and both berry and cluster samples provided similar estimates of TA - but a gram higher than the average from individual cluster measurements.

What does this mean, practically? My only conclusion is that the range of variability tightened (like presidential polls?) slightly, but not much, near the harvest date. Less ripe berries and clusters still lagged at harvest. I can’t draw much of a conclusion from comparing ‘berry’ and ‘whole cluster’ samples - they were close on brix, but differed from the ‘average’ on pH and TA.
**Shaded versus Exposed Clusters.** More compelling is the differences we initially saw between ‘shaded’ and ‘exposed’ clusters. The wider differences seen in the early samples (top) had narrowed by harvest (bottom graph) - indicating that ‘exposed’ and ‘shaded’ clusters became more similar at harvest than they had been 5 weeks before harvest.

### September 10 (Early Sample)

<table>
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<th>Brix</th>
<th>pH</th>
<th>Titratable Acidity (g/L)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Shaded</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Shaded</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Shaded</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### October 21 (Late Sample)

A large part of the ‘early’ difference may have been due to differences in cluster size: Exposed clusters were 25% larger than ‘shaded’ clusters (left) - and brix in the larger (exposed) clusters lagged behind the smaller (shaded) clusters. This size difference persisted, but brix and pH converged. TA averaged 1 g higher in the larger (exposed) clusters.

### Cluster Weight (g)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Weight (g)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaded</td>
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**Take Home Message:** Fruit maturity is variable; different clusters mature at different rates, so it’s important to capture that variability as you sample fruit before harvest. The variability doesn’t go away (in this late-maturing cultivar), but it does appear to narrow a bit. In this case, it looks as though the larger clusters (which happened to be the ‘exposed’ ones) ripened a bit slower than the smaller ones (which happened to be the ‘shaded’ ones). Final note: This was an exceptionally well-managed vineyard, and the canopy wasn’t dense. Results may have been more dramatic in many vineyards with more canopy density - which would sharpen differences in fruit among shaded and exposed clusters. In this vineyard, even the ‘shaded’ clusters weren’t all that shaded - and there was no Botrytis.
Fruit Maturation Report

Samples reported here were collected on Monday, October 27, 2008. This week we only have two samples - both from Long Island, so we’ll include only the Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon results. You can look at previous results at: http://blogs.cce.cornell.edu/grapes/07-veraison-to-harvest-archive/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Harvest Date</th>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Av Berry Wt</th>
<th>% Brix</th>
<th>pH</th>
<th>g/L TA</th>
<th>g/L Tartaric Acid</th>
<th>g/L Malic Acid</th>
<th>g/L Lactic Acid</th>
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<td>21.1</td>
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<td>21.9</td>
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<td>LI-CS-2</td>
<td>1.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Island (prev)</td>
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<td>1.40</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous Average</td>
<td>10/20/2008</td>
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<td>1.48</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>3.24</td>
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<td>10.2</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
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Putting Together Veraison to Harvest: Thanks and Acknowledgements

Chris Gerling and Tim Martinson

As we close out the 2008 season with this final issue of Veraison to Harvest, we’d like to acknowledge and thank all the people who were involved in putting it together each week. This involved collecting samples each monday, overnight shipping to Geneva, sample analysis and compilation (by Wednesday), regional updates and articles (by Thursday), and final production and distribution on Fridays.

Nancy Smith and Ben Gavitt processed samples at the New York Wine Analytical Laboratory

Alice Wise and Libby Tarleton collected Long Island samples and wrote harvest updates

Special thanks to all the Finger Lakes, Lake Erie, Hudson Valley, and Long Island growers and wineries who cooperated with this project.

Joe Whalon and Jordan Gianforte collected samples in the Hudson Valley. Steve Hoying and Steven McKay (not pictured) wrote the weekly updates.

Bill Wilsey collected Finger Lakes samples and Hans Walter-Peterson wrote harvest updates.

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- Lake Erie Regional Grape Program
- Hudson Valley Regional Fruit Program

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