

CHÂTEAU DES CHARMES 2005 HARVEST REPORT

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2005

Field Notes:

Yesterday and today were spent picking the remaining Pinot Noir (at a wonderful 25° brix!) and cleaning up the vineyard where picking was completed. One could assume that once a vineyard block has been completely picked, that would be the end of the work required in that block. Not so. I took an interesting picture (see below) of a specialized piece of equipment at work. The tractor you see pictured here is called an “over the row” tractor (“tracteur en jambeur”) and it is fitted with a hilling plow. As soon as a block is picked, this machine plows each row in such a way that it forms hills around the base of the vines. For those of you who have roses planted in your garden, you know this practice is called “hilling up”. A simple practice for a few rose bushes but on a commercial scale you need a tracteur en jambeur to efficiently do the job. At more than \$120,000 each (more than twice the price of a regular tractor) we make sure we find other ways to use it in the vineyard. By mounding the earth up and over the scion, you help protect the vine for the coming winter. The scion is the point where the *vinifera* vine has been grafted to the North American rootstock. This practice of using North American rootstock is widespread through many of the viticultural regions of the world because it is *phylloxera* resistant. But that’s another discussion.

Cold protection is a topic on many people’s minds in Niagara. Surprisingly, protecting vines in the winter actually starts in the summer. Here are some of the things we do at Château des Charmes every year to help make sure our vines not only survive the winter (either mild or harsh) but also produce a healthy crop the following summer:

- Astute vineyard site selection
- Appropriate varietal selection for each site
- Appropriate clone selection for each site
- Yield management – lower yields allow the vines to store carbohydrates for protection
- Hilling up every row
- Use of wind machines

While none of these practices will ensure you have a full crop each and every year, if practiced routinely they will help you make the most of what Mother Nature has offered.



“Over-the-row” tractor with hilling plow, hilling-up vines on the St. David’s Bench Vineyard.



30 cm hills around vines.



A wind machine on the
St. David's Bench Vineyard

As always, please feel free to email me directly if you have any suggestions or questions. Watch for many more postings as the harvest continues.

Michèle Bosc
michele@chateaudescharmes.com