Harvest 2017
By Aron Weinkauf, Winemaker

WHAT A YEAR – 2017 is definitely one for the history books! The weather extremes that now seem more frequent came in spades this year. Early 2017 began with welcome rain, breaking our five-year drought, setting rainfall records, and causing some flooding in our valley. The wet soils encouraged a late March budbreak and vigorous early season vine growth. The rain also encouraged mildew growth… which was mitigated through our organic practices and May’s high temperatures. Hail surprised us in early June, but it did not adversely affect our Estate Vineyard. The summer was hotter than normal, with more than 26 days over 100°F, seven of those days reaching 110°F+. Temperatures cooled slightly two weeks before and after the August 21st eclipse, but as harvest neared we were once again subject to extreme heat. For our Sauvignon Blanc, we used our fruit processing system that allowed us to destem and optically sort each grape, leaving only the best for our wines. The system was implemented with our Cabernet Sauvignon in mind, and in using it on the Sauvignon Blanc for the first time, it was very successful.

This same heat also impacted our Cabernet vines – the high temperatures caused the vines to protect themselves and the fruit to plateau, and we didn’t see sugar change for nearly a month. This was something we’d never seen as a function of too much heat. Amazingly, what we ultimately picked was completely unexpected. The fruit was juicy, acidic, aromatic, and relatively low in sugars. The resulting wines are beautiful. There won’t be a white wine we make below 14% alcohol, and in a most peculiar turn, the Estate Cabernet Sauvignon will be lucky to achieve that. Luckily for Spottswoode, all of our Estate Cabernet had been brought in prior to the unprecedented wildfires that raged in Napa and Sonoma in early October.

It was a unique and unbelievably challenging growing season and harvest, yet with all of our meticulous attention to detail, we are now glad to sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labor. The 2017 wines are distinctive and beautiful, promising a great life ahead.

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