

ROAD 31 WINE CO.

grin-inducing pinot

Dear Truckers (Fall 2016):

Well, my annual Thanksgiving update has turned into Ho Ho Ho ...

I can't blame the delay on harvest. In fact, this year's harvest was early, quick and relatively easy. We had a mild, early spring and a wonderfully even growing season. No earthquakes rocked this harvest. No rain either. Nor any tractor breakdowns. No viable excuses there.

Instead, I pin the delay on my children; it is all their fault. More specifically, I blame it on Girl Scout meetings, gymnastics, indoor soccer, kung fu and 6th grade Common Core math homework (written in Spanish). Anywho, I just didn't get to the update until now. But let's face it, Christmas is a close second to Thanksgiving. So, season's greetings to you and yours.

I'm in a particularly "white" Christmas mood, as I am writing this from a café in Park City, Utah, with snow coming down hard outside. I'm on a quick trip visiting my handful of accounts in this great state. Yes, this is the land of the teetotaling LDS church, but also the land of fantastic, independent, artisan restaurants. The Tree Room at Sundance Resort — of Robert Redford fame — is my top account in the country. Though, this snowstorm has me a bit worried about possible delays on my afternoon flight back to California, which would tragically cause me to miss Lila's 3rd grade hula dance recital tonight.

Hula or no hula, I have a good bit of other work to do at the cellar over the next few weeks to get the 2016 wines put to bed. While it's hard to assess true quality this early, the moderate growing season, clean ferments, beautiful aromatics, initial weight and intensity, and resulting deep color are all indicators of a very strong vintage. In the coming weeks, I'm hoping malolactic fermentation finishes, and I can get the barrels topped and tucked away in the caves before New Year's.

On other vintage notes, I've had the proud pleasure over the last few days of tasting the 2012, 2013, and 2014 side by side. I have also been sampling the 2015, which I will be offering to you in the spring, and it is a very worthy addition to the lineup. The 2015 had tiny yields, and thus remarkable intensity (but be aware it also means reduced supplies and allocations; look for that offer in March).

Beyond cellar work, the next few weeks bring a lot of pre-holidays duties. Though, let's face it, my wife — bless her — does the heavy lifting of the season. It all started with a bang on Nov. 30th, when Janet roped me into her brilliant Advent calendar idea. For a couple of years she has gotten a huge Lego set for both of the kids (800+ pieces each!) and split them into 25 (50) different bags, hidden and found according to 25 (50) clues. This is the first time she has asked for my help. While I felt I performed admirably at the clue-writing, we also spent some late-night hours following the Lego directions and breaking down the pieces into properly ordered bags, and I somehow ended up with a lot of leftover pieces when I was done. I suspect I'm now fired from the project in future years. I want to thank my wife officially now — in this letter — for putting up with me.

So, for all the fathers/parents out there who are called on for "some assembly required," who have had the tree come loose from the top of the car while barreling down the highway, who risk falls and electrocution hanging Christmas lights, and who are breaking giant Lego sets into tiny plastic bags ... well, what I can offer is for you to go liberate a bottle of Road 31 from your cellar this holiday season. As always, I would be honored to be with you, your family, and your friends in liquid spirit.

—Kent Fortner (Winemaker/Truck-Owner/King of the Road)



NAPA VALLEY