Montescalettato Estate Winery
(Benton City, WA)
Casey Proctor
Fall 2021

Introduction

Montescalettato Estate Winery is an estate winery located in the highly acclaimed Red Mountain AVA. The company has 10 acres of vines (8 total varieties) used to make exceptional small batch bold red wines. Overall, this small business winery looks to connect with their customers by introducing them to great wine that cannot be found in any stores and to educate them on not only the winemaking process but also the grape growing process.

Summary

Having this practical experience has expanded my knowledge of vineyard operations and given me an idea of what a typical vineyard job may be like. This job was a great place to expand on my knowledge that I already possess due to my past vineyard internship and from what I learned in my viticulture courses. In this job, I have acquired many new skills. One of these is learning why a company conducts cluster counts. This is probably one of the most important "tools" in the industry that helps a grower draw many conclusions. Other skills learned include repairing irrigation lines in the vineyard and how to handle, formulate, and spray fungicides in the vineyard. All of these thing will help me grow professionally because what I learned will be necessary to know in a vineyard to meet the seasonal goal of growing high quality grapes. In other words, this will be useful for the entirety of my career in the vineyard to be successful.

Responsibilities

During my time at Montescalettato Estate Winery I took on many jobs. Shown below are some:

- Cluster analysis
- Cluster counts
- Harvest set up

In the left photo I am performing a titratable acidity analysis on a grape juice sample. Titratable acidity content is important in grapes because it plays a role in sensory properties of the produced wine. A titratable acidity range that is acceptable at harvest for red wine grapes is near 6 g/L. In the right photo, I am performing a brix test of this juice sample. A brix test gives a ballpark range of the sugar levels present in the juice. Measuring brix using a hydrometer only gives an estimate of sugars because this method measures total soluble solids. Total soluble solids include: sugars, phenolics, and organic acids.

In this photo are clusters on a vine. One of my roles was to count clusters on vines. For each block, I counted a certain number of clusters on a certain number of vines to help project how big the harvest will be for the block. This is important to know how much wine you are expecting to possibly ferment or whether or not you have enough crop to sell some grapes to another business while also having some to still make wine.

The method for harvesting at this company is by hand. In this photo I am setting up lugs in the vineyard for the pickers to put the grapes in. Estimating the crop on the vine is crucial in this step to know how many vines the lugs need to be spaced apart. This ensures that there is not too many or not too little lugs in the vineyard block. Having too many is bad because they not only need to be picked up while picking up full lugs, but they also could be placed in another vineyard block that will be harvested afterwards.