



# HARPER'S TRAIL

## VINTAGE REPORT 2012

*Courtesy of Thadd Springs vineyard manager John Dranchuk...*

2012 was an unpredictable growing season with a late summer and a cool fall, but a long harvest delivered high-quality grapes with great potential for balanced and delicious table wines. This vintage was an inspiring, learning experience. Kamloops has the benefit of a long growing season with warm days, loads of sunlight, and cool nights - all of which are perfect for premium grape production.

With a potential for low temperatures in the winter of 2011-2012, which ultimately dropped as low as -27 degrees (with wind chill) the base of the vines were mounded with earth across the entire vineyard for extra protection against the cold. The decision was made to leave extra canes (what we call 'kicker canes') for back up.

When bud break started in the spring of 2012 it was assessed that there was minimal damage to the vines, but the kicker canes were left until a later date, to confirm which canes experienced greater growth. It was a costly exercise, as the de-mounding had to be done by hand, but it showed that after only four years, the vines are showing great health and excellent durability. We decided to not mound the vines for the forthcoming winter based on great results from the previous vintage.

Due to a late onset of summer weather, and a cool fall, we let the grapes hang as long as they could, to allow the sugars to rise and the flavour potential to develop.

We started with the Gewürztraminer on September 30, followed by the Pinot Gris on October 6, the Chardonnay on October 11, and the Cabernet Franc on October 22. Across the board, the fruit looked great. The Riesling was harvested on three separate dates: on October 24 for the vines planted in 2008, and on October 25 for the vines planted in 2009. Each should have a terrific balance of fruit, alcohol, and acidity. For the third picking, some of the best Riesling grapes were selected for a late harvest bottling and allowed to hang until November 15. At that point, the grapes were looking shrivelled, with the potential to produce a great wine for dessert!

Overall, the winery harvested 40 tons of fruit in 2012, up significantly from nine tons in 2011. Yields were also relatively low, with most varietals being cropped at around two tons per acre, ensuring concentrated fruit flavours.

What we're doing here will help establish a DVA (Designated Viticulture Region) for the Kamloops region and we feel that climate data and grape quality really do support the creation of a DVA surrounding the Thadd Springs vineyard. For example, the average number of degree growing days is higher in Kamloops than in already-designated areas in the Okanagan such as Kelowna. Average monthly rainfall is also lower than Kelowna, and the vineyard here is near the South Thompson River which provides a steady source of clean water to feed the drip irrigation lines. The wind that sweeps through the valley also decreases any need for mildew sprays and fungicides.

The Harper's Trail team is also helping to support the idea of a new DVA based on what grapes we know will develop their full potential within this region. We're already looking forward to the 2013 harvest, and are confident that the terroir of the region will continue to shine through.