

MONTGOMERY UNCORK'D

By: Karla Nash - Cork This! Winery



As I write this article, it's grape harvest time in Texas. Every year around this time, I am thankful for the fact that I don't personally grow grapes! Cork This! is a full production winery with all but one of our wines being produced on premise, but we don't grow grapes, own a vineyard or ever intend to. Visitors to Cork This! always ask, where our vineyards are located and the answer is simple. We buy our grapes from people that are good at growing grapes (myself not being one of those). We currently source grapes from Texas, California, and Washington,

and we've considered growers in New Mexico and Oregon as well.

I will always live in adoration of the grape grower. Their job is more than difficult. It costs a grape grower on average \$15,000 per acre to plant a vineyard with irrigation, fencing, etc. It takes about 3 - 4 years for the first yield of grapes. During the growing season they will touch each vine about 6 times for pruning and taping the vines, etc. and there are about 800 vines per acre. Ugh! As I tell my customers, owning a manufacturing business is a ton of work. I am constantly behind on something. I can't imagine adding grape growing into the fold. So I rely on other people as do most other wineries in Texas and across the country.

When we first opened the winery, we thought we'd buy all of grapes from the great State of Texas but what we quickly found out is that Texas, because of the climate and soil conditions, doesn't grow enough grapes for all of us.

In fact, (and these statistics vary by source) Texas has under 3000 acres of grapes planted in the whole state. That's fewer acres than some people's cattle ranch! With over 200 wineries, that means that about 2/3 of all wine produced in the State of Texas is made from fruit outside the state. Is this some big secret? Heck no! Any wine maker will tell you where they get their grapes, whether it is from their vineyard or someone else's. So is our wine considered "Texas wine"? Yes, if it is made in Texas it is considered "Texas Wine". This is why I always laugh when someone says they don't like Texas wine. That person clearly doesn't know what they are talking about. Good fruit makes good wine (plus a little talent from the wine maker). The grapes grown in Texas are good, we are just limited on the varieties we can grow well in this climate and we are limited on quantity. There are several wineries that try very hard (or down right insist on it) to make all their wine from the grapes they grow personally or grapes sourced solely from Texas. Several wineries in our area also grow grapes on premise and then own additional vineyards in the western part of the State where the climate is better for grape growing.

Over the years, we have developed strong relationships with our grape growers and we trust their input on each year's crop as it varies depending on the amount of rain and sun, brix (sugar), disease issues, etc. When someone says, "That was a really good year", that means that the grapes had the right amount of sun, they got the right amount of rain and the crop yielded a really good grape which in turn made a really good wine. At Cork This!, our grapes are shipped to us three ways. They come whole in a large cardboard tote by the ton in a refrigerated truck or, if we can request it, they come to us as must (which means they are already crushed) and in the case of our sweet wines; they come to us as juice. Our sweet wines yield the least amount of effort my wine maker or I have to put forth but it's honestly more fun to make wine starting from the grape.

My take away message for you in this article is this: If it's made in Texas, it's Texas wine. The Texas wine industry employs thousands of people and is responsible for a significant amount of tourism dollars which helps our state prosper. Second, good fruit makes good wine. It doesn't matter where that fruit comes from. No one can grow all varieties of grapes at one location. Not even in California, nor would it make good sense to do so. Third, if you think Texas wine isn't good, you are obviously living under a rock or lack any knowledge of wine in Texas. And lastly, if you want to learn more visit a Texas winery. We are open and honest and happy to share with you what we know. For a listing of all Texas wineries please visit www.gotexanwine.org or for a listing of our local wineries please go to www.texasbluebonnetwinetrail.com. ♦

I hope to see you soon!
Cheers,

Karla Nash

TWO GREAT WINERIES, ONE HISTORIC TOWN!

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