Avoiding Success – Observations on Some of the More Common Mistakes in the Grape and Wine Industry

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Where do the more common mistakes come from?

• Lack of knowledge
  – About grape/wine production
  – About industry functions and dynamics

• Lack of planning
  – “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.”

• Sometimes just making bad decisions regardless
“Proper site selection and site preparation are critical components to viticultural success. Doing a poor job of either is like preparing to run a race by shooting yourself in the foot.”

- Said by somebody not famous.
Poor site selection

• Site is important because it impacts several aspects of grape production:
  – Frost/freeze risk
  – Insect/disease/animal problems
  – Potential yield and fruit quality
  – Health and longevity of the vineyard
  – Costs of production, profitability, economic viability
Poor site selection
Poor/no site preparation

• Importance of pre-plant site preparation:
  – Necessary to prepare proper conditions for healthy and extensive root growth
  – First and best chance to correct soil pH and nutritional condition
  – First and best chance to correct soil drainage problems
  – Best opportunity to remove perennial weeds, brush, trees
  – Create or maintain uniformity within blocks
Poor variety selection

• Importance of winegrape variety selection:
  – Should have good wine quality potential
  – Should be suited to local climatic conditions
  – Should be in demand or capable of being sold (at a profit)
  – Should be economical to produce

• Worst reason: I like the wine!
  – BTW, if a variety is totally unsuited to your climate, trying a different clone is not likely to make it work
Establishment and management practices

- Poor trellis design
- Weed management
- Irrigation management
- Really bad pruning
Winemakers aren’t exempt

- Problems (mostly with those new to commercial winemaking) due to:
  - Oxidation
  - Poor/improper cleaning and sanitation
  - Improper/no use of SO$_2$
Poor business/marketing planning

• Vineyards
  – Often because of no understanding of how industry functions
    • “I’m going to grow grapes and sell them to the local winery.”
      Q: Does the winery know this?
  – Relying on chance (a.k.a. - the spot market)
  – Relying heavily on a single buyer

• Wineries
  – Overestimating market demand
  – Field of (Broken) Dreams - “If you ferment it they will come”
  – Winemakers making the wines they like to drink
Industry unity

• Avoid factions
• Industry cooperation – work together as an industry to raise quality level and promote improvement in grape and wine production
• Promote your industry as a whole and everybody benefits