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Sauvignon Blanc Earns a Solid Reputation

Christopher Sawyer *Excerpts from August, 2005 Article*

KNOWN FOR ITS beautiful golden hue, fragrant aromas and magnificent flavor profiles, Sauvignon Blanc has earned a solid reputation at wineries as being more than just the "other" white wine.

The new *en vogue* movement and other hot topics regarding a variety that was once called "poor man's Chardonnay" were recently discussed at the **International Sauvignon Blanc Symposium** (ISSB), held May 10-11th at the Konocti Harbor Resort and Spa in Kelseyville, CA.

>>>>>**Begin Excerpt** >>>>>>>>>

THE MUSQUE CLONE

In addition to the classic Wente clone, many of the plantings in the county include Sauvignon Musque (FPMS 27), a perfumed aromatic clone isolated in Pont de la Maye, France in 1962. Wines made from these types of expressive grapes tend to feature upfront fruity qualities, raw honey flavors, great viscosity and a musky scent similar to Muscat.

In the Red Hills, Lake County AVA, southwest of Kelseyville, **Gary** and **Barbara Snider** are proprietors of the **Fortress Vineyard** that features the Musque clone. Located at the top of Benson Ridge at elevations stretching between 2,000 and 2,400 feet, the vineyard began development in 1998. The title "Fortress" refers to the wall created by the enormous amount of rock removed from the well-drained red volcanic soil.

Today, the Musque grapes planted on the property are cane pruned on a Scott-Henry trellis system with an east-west row orientation to protect the vines from the cool brisk breezes that pick up each afternoon. The Sniders said they decided to work with the unique clonal material because of how well it has complemented high-end Sauvignon Blanc programs by **Cain**, **Araujo** and **Cakebread Estate** in Napa Valley, **Selene** (**Hyde Vineyard**) in Carneros, **Murphy-Goode** in Alexander Valley and the similarities the flavor profiles have to **Graves** in Bordeaux. "Our objective is not to make Sauvignon Blanc like Chardonnay but to make Sauvignon Blanc acceptable to Chardonnay consumers," said Gary Snider.

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> Gary Snider, Fortress Vineyards

At harvest, the moderate yields are picked on two separate occasions: The first at 22-22.5 Brix to help retain the natural acidity of the small-sized clusters, the second at 26 Brix to add more layers of complexity and additional weight to the final blend.

Once the fruit arrives at the crush facility, it is pressed, the solids are removed and enzymes and VL3 yeast are added. The must is then transferred into two-or three-year-old French oak barrels, where it goes through complete malolactic fermentation.

The result is a wine that is crisp and clean, featuring bright, vibrant notes of citrus, tangerine, apricot, an elegant creamy texture and a long, lingering finish. In other words, it's a wine that is very user friendly and worth its retail price of around $20 per bottle.

>>>>>>**End Excerpt** >>>>>>>>>

Christopher Sawyer is a journalist, wine consultant and sommelier based in Sonoma, CA.