

# SUISUN VALLEY GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION.



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## Special Features: Ted Osborne's Winemakers Journal Roger King's Fields of Syrah, Picking Chardonnay

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Roger King was born to grow grapes and work the land. He just didn't realize that until he was 40 years old. He turns 60 next week. The first year we worked together was 2002. Back then, he didn't quite trust my credentials and I didn't quite trust his. Then, we tasted the 02 Syrah and 02 Petite Sirah out of the barrel and thought, "Let's do this!"

What you don't see in this Syrah vineyard is any drip irrigation. Roger's Syrah and Petite Sirah vineyards are dry farmed. The vines get all their water from the soil. And if you've ever been to Napa from June to November, you know we get virtually no rain until winter. That means that these roots have got to find all the water they need from deep down in the earth. That is a big part of what we mean by terroir.

### Tuesday, September 23, 2008

Woke up, checked all the weather forecasts for all the vineyards left to be picked, made lunches for the kids, drove the school carpool to St. Helena, visited the winery to check the Chardonnay barrel ferments (some fruity, some floral, some funky, but progressing all progressing

nicely), then off over the mountains to visit Roger King's vineyards in Suisun Valley. Walked the vineyard, ate the berries, and studied the vines. We decided to check the grapes again on the weekend. They've got the sugar, but the full flavor has not come in yet. So we wait, and watch the weather.

*At right:* The tank of 07 Olabisi Syrah from Roger King's Vineyard. This wine is now in barrel, waiting to be bottled in the spring.

Headed back up to the new tasting room to meet some customers and work on the details for the grand opening party (email invites, order custom etched Riedel glassware, build the tasting bar, etc.)

Now back up to the winery to check on a small lot of red wine I'm making for a client. With each wine, my aim is to promote a wild yeast fermentation. There are many reasons and theories about why this is better than inoculating the must with store-bought yeasts. The main reason is that it makes the wine taste better. So after soaking on the skins for four days, we're warming up the tank from 55 degrees Fahrenheit to 75 degrees and watching to see, smell, and feel when and if the wild yeasts start to party. This means that I check the top of the tank and waft the aromas up to my nose, like checking the aromas of a cooking pot on the stovetop. Seems like the ferment is thinking about starting. Keep the heat on for tonight and come back first thing in the morning to check it again.



Olabisi Wines crush  
Syrah fermenting tank