



## ALPHA OMEGA

Winemakers Update April 29, 2024

As we head into May, things are getting busier both in the vineyard and in the cellar.

In the winery we continue to blend and assemble our 2022 reds up-to-tank for bottlings over the next two months. We also continue with our first rackings of the 2023 reds and stirring the 2023 whites, topping up barrels as we go.

In the vineyard, we are counting buds to estimate potential crop load and thinning out extra buds where they are too plentiful and concentrated. We have begun mowing cover crops where the soil moisture is right and spraying to protect against mildew in the quickly growing shoots.

Next month, sheep will be introduced to a few of our most readily compatible sites for the first time, to eat the cover crop, lightly turn and aerate the soil, and leave behind valuable waste that will nurture the soil and microbes within it. This is a great starting point to discuss Regenerative Farming which compliments our sustainable farming methods in Alpha Omega's vineyards.

Regenerative Farming is not a specific technique, but an approach to agriculture that involves returning crucial organic nutrients to the soil that are continuously being depleted through farming. The development of chemical fertilizers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century encouraged farmers to move away from regenerative techniques, unfortunately at the expense of the long-term health of the land they were farming.

Biodiversity and soil health are the key emphases of regenerative farming. The idea is to create a functioning ecosystem, where inputs are vastly reduced, and where management techniques create an ecosystem that does the job previously attempted by using inputs. By focusing on organic soil health, vines gain longevity and resilience to climate extremes.

Carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients are naturally utilized by the soil when we grow grapevines and harvest our fruit. Similarly, carbon is lost to the atmosphere in the form of CO<sub>2</sub> as a primary byproduct of fermentation. One of the primary tenets of regenerative farming is returning and increasing carbon in the soil. How do we traditionally return carbon to the vineyard? Sustainable viticultural techniques help capture CO<sub>2</sub>. Prunings can be mulched into the soil. Grape stems, skins and seeds are also composted and returned to the soil in the form of solid compost or liquid organic compost teas and distributed through our irrigation drip lines.

Diverse cover crops not only protect the soil from erosion and host a variety of insect and vertebrate life, but they also return key nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium to the soil which subsequently encourages diversification and growth of the soil microflora.

Regenerative Agriculture is a big focus in our industry right now for good reason... it encompasses logical, effective, and practical methods that complement our sustainable farming techniques.