

The day after Halloween, Jennifer, Alyssa and I made the trip to Shinn Estate Vineyards and Farmhouse in Upstate New York. This will be my very first time actually visiting a vineyard and see how the wines we love so much in class are made. Shinn Estate is owned by Barbara Shinn and David Page and their vineyard and the wines they produced has been featured in the NY Times, the World Street Journal, Wine Spectator and other respectable publishers.

We scheduled for a 1:30 vineyard walk and a 2:30 winery and barrel cellar tour. Both of those tours came with a complimentary wine tasting for 4 different kinds of wines. We arrived early so we decided to do the wine tasting in their tasting room first instead of after the tour. I tasted a special wickham's pear cider which is made from locally farmed pears, a Pinot Blanc which they purposely left the yeast in for an



added flavor, nine barrels which is a blend of Merlot, Petit Verdot and Malbec and lastly the a 2009 estate merlot which is one of their signatures. It wasn't long until Barbara herself showed up and took us to being the vineyard walk. Barbara was very nice and accommodating. She took us to the vast vineyard which is right outside the tasting room. She said that the vineyard grows **Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Petit Verdot, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay and Riesling**. She picked a **cluster** of Chardonnay and handed over to us so that we can taste it. Unfortunately, most of the grapes has been harvested already so what we were tasted was just left



over grapes that wasn't yet ripe as the time of harvest. One thing Barbara was very proud of was the fact that she practices **permaculture**, which mean working with other than against nature. She began an interesting explanation on how it



works. She said that they never pluck out any weeds or plants, she allows them to grow, bloom and go to seed. She explained that the natural cycle of growth helps maintain the vigor of her vineyard. She also said that all the green life growing besides the grape vines provide food and shelter for beneficial insects which gives them natural insect control, that beneficial insects will prey on the unwelcome pests. "Mother natural does half of my job for me." she laughed.



Next, she went into details about the structure of the grapes vines and how it grows. There are several thick trunks that rises from the soil and extends out left and right into a T shape and it runs all the ways across the whole

meadow. In the summer wires are installed to hold the vines upright. Barbara said that this stricture is the most efficient way for the vines to catch sunlight and allow

**photosynthesis** to take place.

Barbara had us kneel down to inspect the black tubes on the bottom of all the vines. They are irrigation conduits with water emitters. She said they typically don't need to **irrigate**. But because of the dry summer this year, they had to. The drip irrigation is



also sometimes used to add liquid nutrients directly under the vine such as the fish, seaweed and compost tea.



We didn't get a chance to go on the barrel cellar tour because the tour is only available for six or more people. But Barbara gave us a quick look inside. They use both stainless steel tanks and wooden barrels.



There is also a special container in the middle of the wood barrel's room. It's for the Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Barbara's husband, David personally comes down every two to three days to measure the



temperature of the wine.



One the drive home, I kept thinking about this experience. You see restaurants all over the country offer wine and people drinking wine. But who out of all of us actually know the story behind wine making. I didn't. I learned a lot during this visit, I learned that a fine bottle of wine requires the right weather, the suitable soil, the perfect time and a lot of manual labor. I had a great learning experience during this trip, a trip

I would never forget the next time I order a glass of wine.

## References

- Shinn, B. (n.d.). Shinn Estate Vineyards and Farmhouse. Retrieved November 28, 2015, from <http://shinnestatevineyards.com/>
- What is permaculture? (n.d.). Retrieved November 28, 2015, from <http://www.heathcote.org/PCIntro/2WhatIsPermaculture.htm>