

## Don Hagge, Vidon Vineyard & Winery – Interview Questions & Responses

July 2016

1. For many years, you had been living and working in California. Why have you decided to build a brand new winery in Oregon and not in California?

***I was recruited to Oregon by a venture capitalist as the CEO of a startup semiconductor company. During this time, I biked in the Willamette Valley regularly and loved the vineyards. Since I lived in France some time ago, Pinot Noir has been a favorite wine. I grew on a farm and decided to make a career change and what could be better than buying land, planting a vineyard and learning how to make wine? Oregon was gaining a reputation for Pinot Noir so here I am.***

2. Your very first wines were made in 2002. Do you still have any of those bottles left? If you do, how do they drink today?

***Unfortunately the 2002 vintage is gone. I made only 40 cases and didn't label it, only for friends and personal use. We just had a 2006 vintage this evening which is fantastic.***

3. During all the years of Vidon's winery existence, what was the most difficult vintage for you and why?

***Probably the 2007 vintage. This was the first year I used my own winery so many things were new. I saw the forecast for heavy weather, got a crew and pulled in 16 tons on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Before we finished cleaning the equipment it started raining and didn't stop for a month. Most people suffered through the rains and the vintage got a bad rap in the press. We were lucky – it's still a beautiful wine!***

4. For how long do you typically age your Pinot Noir wines in French oak Barrels?

***Most of my wine carries the 3-Clones label and gets 11 months in French oak barrels which are on average 30% new. I'm not a fan of big oak in any wine.***

5. You are an enthusiastic proponent of glass enclosures instead of traditional cork. When did you start using glass enclosures? Also, did you ever try to bottle the same vintage both with glass enclosures and traditional corks and then compare the results of the aging?

***Until the 2008 vintage I used corks and usually quite expensive ones. However, I determined that no matter what they cost, they still taint wine because of TCA and pre-oxidize occasionally. Therefore, in 2008 I began using Stelvin screw caps. In 2009 I started using Vinoseals for the Single Clone labels. No, I've never done a comparison of cork vs Vinoseal glass closures. It's not necessary, I know what corks do and Vinoseals and screw caps don't do. I don't understand why anyone uses a closure that ruins a percentage of their wines when there are alternatives that don't.***

6. Today, you are producing a number of different white and red wines. Do you have any plans (if not plans, may be at least some thoughts) about starting to produce Rose and/or Sparkling wines?

***I made Rose for two vintages and one was a great, I was told. I'd like to do a Sparkling but my winery is too small given what I'm now doing. That's not to say I'm not dreaming of a winery expansion and interested in trying more and different wines.***

7. Outside of your own wines, which are your favorite Pinot Noir producers in the world?  
***Good Bourgogne wines are what I like to emulate. The 2004 vintage was the nearest to a great Bourgogne that I've made.***
8. If you would have an opportunity to start your winery again, would you do something different?  
***Given the resources I had, not much. Perhaps I'd build a better winery instead of an expensive house, but I have a wife. 😊***
9. You describe your approach in the vineyard as “minimal intervention”, and your winery is LIVE Certified. Do you have any plans to become certified organic or biodynamic winery?  
***I'm a scientist and Biodynamic winemaking isn't scientific. Many of their practices are good, how they treat the land, etc. But I don't believe in VooDoo. I don't believe that Organic Certification results in better wine or land management than what we do in the LIVE program.***
10. I understand that you have built your own bottling line wine dispenser for the tasting room. What are the other technological tools which you built at your winery?  
***I don't think I've built anything for winemaking that any good farm boy couldn't have. I'm always trying to find ways to simplify tasks and become more efficient in using time and material. I have an idea about saving wine and labor in barrel topping but haven't implemented it yet. My use of Flex tanks to replace some barrels is already saving wine and labor by eliminating barrel topping while producing wine that's equivalent to that from barrels.***
11. You already work with quite a few grapes (Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Tempranillo, Cab Franc, Syrah). Do you plan to add any other grapes in the vineyard?  
***No more varieties. No more land to plant. However, I do hope to plant a small plot of Coury clone Pinot Noir next year. Planting of the clone date back 50 years to the original plantings.***
12. What drives your passion? You started Vidon vineyards at the age when most of the people are happily retiring, so there must be some deep reason for you to engage in such a – of course, labor of love – but hard labor?  
***I like to live. I'm not ready to “stop” and watch TV. I think having a ToDo list every morning and a little anxiety and stress about getting things done will result in a longer life. To have no challenges is pretty dull and boring. When one is doing things that one enjoys, it's not labor.***