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Cayuse Welcomes Horse to Vineyard Crew

Walla Walla, Wash., October 1, 2008—A brand new member of the Cayuse Vineyards team is helping to further revolutionize its farming practices. A three-year-old Belgian draft horse named Zeppo is working the rocky Horsepower Vineyard, thus eliminating all powered machinery from the two-acre plot.

In 2002, Cayuse was the first vineyard in the Walla Walla Valley to fully implement biodynamic farming practices, and now is the first in the Walla Walla Valley to utilize a horse for vineyard cultivation. “This isn’t for show,” says vigneron and owner Christophe Baron, who comes from a family of French vignerons that used horses to plow their vineyards until 1957. “It closes the circle by integrating animals into the farm and showing respect for the old ways.”

Prior to reporting for duty at Cayuse, Zeppo was trained to perform plowing and other farming tasks, and his specialized equipment was painstakingly created by a blacksmith in Burgundy, France. Beyond the aesthetic advantage of eliminating noisy tractor engines, Baron is convinced the horse will enhance the close, spiritual connection he strives to maintain with his vineyards. “The opportunity to work the ground without a tractor as my grandfathers did, walking behind Zeppo and feeling the earth under my feet, is a great privilege,” he says.

At Horsepower Vineyard, Zeppo will work one acre of Syrah and one of Grenache. Planted in 2008 with tight three-by-three-foot spacing and 4840 vines per acre, Horsepower Vineyard recreates the way vines were planted in Champagne prior to the phylloxera infestation in the 1880’s. “This is the start of a great challenge that brings us closer to nature and helps protect the environment,” says Baron.

Cayuse Vineyards is a 100 percent estate vineyard located in the Walla Walla. Best known for its highly acclaimed Syrah, Cayuse currently creates 12 estate wines from fruit harvested on 51 acres of vines planted in ancient riverbed rock. In fact, the word “Cayuse” refers to the Native American tribe named by French-Canadian traders from the French “cailloux,” which means “stones.” A native of France, Baron developed a passion for farming growing up in his family’s centuries-old Champagne House, Baron Albert.

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For more information about horse farming, biodynamics and Cayuse Vineyards, call 509/526-0686 or e-mail info@cayusevineyards.com.



