

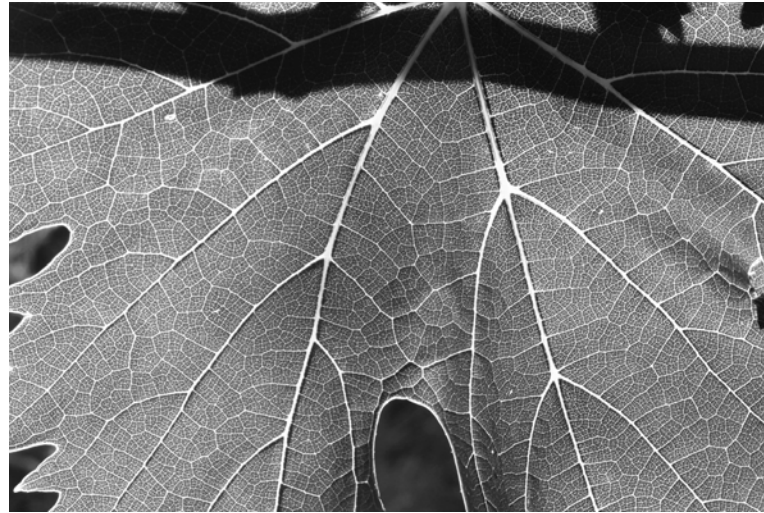
## The Genius of the Place

The sun has risen over Idaho since long before Idaho even was. In the beginning there were no hillsides, no sagebrush and no whistlepigs. The wind and rain knew nothing about badgers that would one day drill large holes across the landscape. Over the course of several eternities, the earth temporarily stopped erupting, flooding, cooling and shifting. Frozen in time for the moment, these are now the Eagle foothills.

The French have a word for how soil, weather, elevation and length of day combine to create an ecosystem, a place for living organisms to grow. *Terroir* is an Old World term that is associated with places like the Champagne region of France, which has particular growing characteristics that distinguish it from everywhere else on this earth. It describes why the Tuscans have been growing Sangiovese grapes for centuries in ground older than dirt. Ancient Roman winemakers knew that those grapes would reappear from old and even older vines each year, and wines would flow forever through the streets of Rome.

But terroir transcends continents and the passage of time. The Eagle foothills have a particular terroir, reflected in the distinctive character of its grapes. It is now recognized as distinct, definable wine region, an American Viticulture Area (AVA).

A Sangiovese grape leaf emerged in these foothills this spring, a New World leaf sprouting from an Old World vine. The vine that produced the leaf has Italian history in its veins. The leaf, on the other hand, is new life and is product to what occurred in the winter of 2016-17. Idaho experienced snow that lasted a half a season too long with temperatures that some would suggest were colder



than any place has experienced in recorded time. One might say that this leaf emerged against considerable odds, but it did emerge, and that is the story of survival. Despite the romantic clothing that envelops the drinking of wine, the growing of grapes is still just agriculture. The grower is still a farmer.

Potatoes are planted, pulled from the ground, replanted, and pulled from the ground. On that same ground, they rotate with corn or maybe sugar beets to balance out the depletion of soil nutrients that differ with each type of

crop. But the grapevine is not a potato nor is it a sugar beet. It will either survive in place or become its own grave marker. It is subject to the quirks of changing terroir and its success is revealed when new foliage appears.

The emergence of a leaf from a plant subject to unreasonable expectations is a testament to the plant's genetics. Its productivity will be proof that it belongs in this place. And proof of that resilience will play itself out next season and the next. The leaf's own story will be short-lived, but not before it generates sustenance for the mother plant. The leaf's only chance at immortality is to be captured by a camera sensor and stored on a hard drive. Its fate is to shrivel, drop to the ground and become part of the nutrient cycle that will feed next year's leaves.

The Eagle Foothills have the right stuff for sustaining Sangiovese vines and others. But the terroir should never be taken for granted, the multi-layers of geological history perpetually affected by rotting leaves, global climate cycles, a lightning induced wildfire or the worst winter since the beginning of time.