

The Story of O'Blivion

When we were building Obscurity Cellars' winery, we planted the surrounding hillsides with Alicante Bouschet, Charbono, Petite Sirah and Malbec vines in 2003. At the first harvest in 2005 (the so-called "third leaf," because it's the third year the vines have had leaves after planting), the yield from three of the four acres of vines was only 400-600 pounds, not enough to make even one barrel of varietal wine. Even though we were pledged to creating 100% varietal, single-vineyard wines, we created a "blend of necessity" of three of the wines (the fourth, Malbec, seemed unusually dark and heavy, and was made into a single barrel of 2005 Malbec "Ultra," twenty cases of which are still developing in the bottle at the winery).

Because our newsletter is named *Between Obscurity and Oblivion*, we thought it would be fun to name the blend "Oblivion." We mentioned our plan to Mike O'Brien, whose vineyard was the source of the notorious (You Bet) Shiraz, and he suggested including some of his Syrah in the blend and adding an apostrophe to the name to signify the inclusion. Immediately, O'Blivion was born.

The original wine was released in 2007 to the delight of our customers, and was awarded a Gold Medal and judged the best Red Table Wine of the Sierra Foothills at the California State Fair. Encouraged by this success, we prepared a successor, called "Son of O'Blivion," which was equally applauded by our customers and judged the best Red Wine of the Sierra Foothills, beating out all the Zinfandels, Cabernets and Syrahs from a seven-county region. It sold out rapidly, and many disappointed customers were turned away when they returned for more. The two blends were slightly different, reflecting the difference in growing years and vine development.

Interestingly, even though the federal agents who scrutinize and approve every word on every wine label had no objection to the original O'Blivion, they took exception to the "Son of O'Blivion," contending that the word "oblivion" connoted being drunk to the point of total forgetfulness. We pointed out that the first definition in the dictionary was to "the state of being totally forgotten," and after a long battle, we prevailed with assurance from the Assistant Director of the department that we would be free to use "O'Blivion" on future labels.

The third in the series, "Grandson of O'Blivion," was prepared for bottling in February of 2009, with hopes it would delight as much as the first two in the family. We're not sure how the naming lineage will be continued, but we're playing with additional family members like "O'Blivion's Weird Uncle," "O'Blivion's Delinquent Nephew," or "O'Blivion's Bratty Niece." We're sure, though, that if we ever have to make a blend without the O'Brien Syrah, it will be known as "The Illegitimate Son of O'Blivion."

-John Smith, January 26, 2009