

2002 SYRAH Dry Creek Valley Estate "It's the Dawning of a New Era"

It seems like my favorite musical performers, sports franchises and, yes, wineries, have a string of successful years that might be called a "golden age". Some examples include: the Stones circa 1970 with Mick Taylor; the late 1980's Oakland A's Bash Brothers Jose Canseco and Mark McGuire (Oops! That was the beginning of a different era.); the early 1970's A's with Catfish Hunter, Reggie Jackson and Rollie Fingers; the entire past 100 years with J.J. Prum winery in Germany's Mosel region.

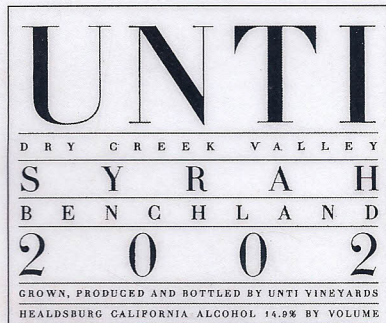
This 2002 Syrah heralds a new era for Unti Syrah. We have a unique synthesis of factors contributing to this being a more complex Syrah. By 2002, we were making wines from our Northern Rhone Syrah clones 174, 877, 383 and 470. Despite being from young vines, a couple lots were so good they had to be rushed to the major league level, thus we included them in our standard Syrah (sounds like the A's 2005 starting pitching). The new clones add a blueberry/olive component to the wine, which is classic St. Joseph or Cornas.

Additionally, this Syrah shows winemaker Sébastien Pochan's hand. Sébastien felt strongly about including the new-vine Syrah into our main blend for the aforementioned reasons. Furthermore, for the first time ever, we decided to blend 5% Grenache into our main Syrah. Here, we are using Grenache for the same reason other producers blend Viognier into their Syrah; for added aromatics and a juicier mouth-feel.

Oh, by the way, this wine benefits from the 2002 vintage: big, dark and juicy wines with great acid balance. This '02 definitely represents our (George, Mick and Sébastien) style of making Dry Creek Valley Syrah. It's complexity is driven by the fruit and vineyard character. While this is a clean Syrah, it still has a wild side that would make Lou Reed proud.

2002 SYRAH

Harvested: 9/24 through 9/27/02
Total Acidity: .61 g/100ml
pH: 3.75
Aging: 14 months in French oak barrels & puncheons, 30% new
Blend: 95% Syrah, 5% Grenache Noir
Alcohol: 14.8%
Bottled: 11/11/03
Cases Produced: 993



2002 Benchland Reserve SYRAH Our BALCO Blend

For years we have been eyeing the scraggly vines located on a little knoll within our original 6-acre benchland Syrah vineyard. Here, the vines have fewer clusters of tiny thick-skinned Syrah grapes. In 2002, we harvested this section separately to see if our intuition of getting more concentrated wine was correct. From day one in the fermenter this wine proved worthy of a special designation.

So what should we do with our most concentrated Syrah to date? Age it in a high percentage of new French oak for 18 months; longer than any other Syrah we've ever made. What you get is a 2002 Benchland Reserve wine that tastes like we are pandering to the press by making chewy, jammy Syrah with flashy oak. Untivino? If you are wondering about the wine's hat size, or the status of one of its delicate body parts, I'll have you talk to my attorney. Besides, we only use flaxseed oil to clean our Benchland Reserve barrels.

While the Benchland Reserve will currently satisfy those of you who are longing for a full-throttle Unti Petite Sirah, in 4 to 6 years it should be much less audacious. In time, the oak will retreat to where it belongs (the background), in exchange for the wild Syrah aromas/flavors of bayleaf, blackberry and smoked meat; descriptors that have always been part of the wine's vineyard pedigree. This is definitely one for the cellar.

In addition to the 310 cases of this 2002 Benchland Syrah, we have 294 magnums (1.5 liters) for you collectors or hedonists. There is a 3 bottle limit per person for the magnums.

2002 SYRAH BENCHLAND RESERVE

Harvested: 9/24 through 9/27/02
Total Acidity: .50 g/100ml
pH: 3.9
Aging: 18 months in French oak barrels, 30% new
Blend: 100% Syrah
Alcohol: 14.9%
Bottled: 03/15/04
Cases Produced: 310 750ml and 49 1.5L