



VARIETAL & VINEYARD: This Syrah comes from both our benchland vineyard and our recently planted vines located on the winery property. While the 6-acre benchland block has been the mainstay of our Syrah program through 2001, the new vineyards feature the much heralded Northern Rhone clones 174, 877, 383 and 470. All of our vineyards are located in the Dry Creek Valley.

VINTAGE: We've already extolled the virtues of the 2003 vintage in our previously released wine. Harvest conditions were typically ideal -- sunny, warm days with cool and foggy mornings -- enabling us to push the ripeness envelope while maintaining higher than normal acid levels, more European, which is to our liking. We harvested the grapes from September 22nd through October 2nd, at sugars ranging from 25.5 to 26 degree brix. By then the skins were soft and seeds were brown. We've learned that picking Syrah at this stage of physiological ripeness results in added aromatics and flavors. It also helps to avoid green tannins that can occur at lower stages of ripeness.

WINEMAKING: The grapes were cold soaked for 5 days in closed-top stainless steel tanks before fermentation. The wine was aggressively aerated during fermentation with pump-overs being done twice daily through a sump and screen. We also used the occasional *delestages*, which is French for "drain and return." As in 2002, we blended Grenache for the same reasons some producers blend Viognier into Syrah: to boost up the fruit, enhance the mouthfeel and aromatics. The Syrah was aged in French Oak, 25% new, for 14 months. It was bottled unfined and unfiltered.

STYLE/DESCRIPTION: This is undoubtedly the prettiest Syrah we've ever made, which makes sense given the additional vineyard sources, and the amount of Grenache we used in the final blend. You'll recognize the classic Unti blackberry/smoked meat character, but this 2003 is accented nicely by violets, lavender and raspberry liqueur -- all Rhone-like descriptors. This full-bodied, dark Syrah has excellent depth, richness and balance. The wine will age for 4 to 6 years, though it won't make it that long in my house.

Mick

Harvested: 9/22/03 to 10/2/03

Total acidity: 0.72g/100ml

pH: 3.75

Oak aging: 14 months; French barrels, 25% new

Blend: 85% Syrah, 15% Grenache Noir

Alcohol: 14.6%

Bottled: 12/6/04

Cases Produced: 1,500