



VARIETAL & VINEYARD: This Syrah comes from a tiny section within our 6-acre vineyard located on the eastside Dry Creek Bench. The vines on this little knoll are much less vigorous, due to the well-drained soils, and as such produce smaller grapes with more concentrated flavors and tannins than the balance of the Syrah vineyard. Our typical yield in this section is less than six pounds per vine.

VINTAGE: The 2004 vintage was a tricky one for us. Sunny and warm conditions from mid-August to mid-September accelerated sugar development and caused our Syrah grapes to shrivel. As such, we harvested all of our Syrah from 9/10 through 9/16, which is about 1 to 2 weeks earlier than normal. We managed to achieve full physiological ripeness, but in doing so we had to discard quite a few completely dried bunches at the sorting table. Surprisingly we ended up with ripe aromatics and flavors, not unlike the great 1997 vintage, with good acid and tannin structure. The conditions concentrated both sugars and acids.

WINEMAKING: The grapes were cold soaked for 5 days in closed and open-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. Once in barrel, we routinely stir lees for added texture and complexity. Our Benchland Syrah showed so well early on, that we decided to rack this wine only once during its time in barrel. We aged this wine in 45% new French Oak for 17 months. This 100% Syrah was bottled unfined and unfiltered.

STYLE/DESCRIPTION: This Benchland Reserve is our most dramatic statement with Syrah. While the 2004 shows the riper side of Dry Creek Syrah, it still shows the vineyard character we have come to appreciate from this site: dark color and full body along with blackberry, smoke and chocolate aromas/flavors. In 2004, dried grapes gave us more intense blackberry liqueur fruit and a lush texture on the palate. Though this wine is built to age 7 to 10 years, the ripe tannins will tempt you to drink it before then.

Mick

Harvested: 9/10/04 through 9/16/04

Total acidity: 0.70g/100ml

pH: 3.82

Oak aging: 17 mos. French Oak barrels, 45% new

Blend: 100% Syrah

Alcohol: 14.8%

Bottled: 3/24/06

Cases Produced: 250