



VARIETAL & VINEYARD: Cuvée Foudre is a blend of our best Grenache, Mourvedre and Syrah from the great 2005 vintage. We used Alban selection Grenache planted on a low-vigor rootstock called 420-A, Tablas Creek selection Mourvedre and our winery block Syrah (clones 383 and 470). These clones, selected from Chateauneuf du Pape, give darker color and better structure than the majority of Grenache planted in California, and on our property. The vineyards are planted to dense spacing (1800 vines per acre), yielding less than 6 pounds per vine.

VINTAGE/HARVEST: 2005 is unquestionably our best vintage to date for Grenache and, especially, Mourvedre. Late spring rain in May and June caused a considerable amount of bunch shatter (bunches with grapes missing), which in turn provided us with the darkest Grenache grapes we have ever seen. A moderate growing season allowed us to patiently wait until the grapes were very ripe, or as the French would say, *surmaturite*, which is when Grenache develops its most interesting flavors. We harvested the grapes at an average of 27-degree brix October 20th-October 26th. We normally drop 50 to 60% of the crop, limiting the yield to 6 pounds per vine, but in 2005 Mother Nature did it for us.

VINIFICATION: The Grenache was crushed into small, open-top tanks, we drain a portion of the juice, a method commonly used in the Rhone called *saignée*, to intensify color and structure. After a five day cold-soak, the fermentation begins spontaneously with indigenous yeast. The Syrah used for this blend was whole-cluster fermented. This adds an additional layer of spice to the wine. We aged this wine in a 620 gallon foudre, a size commonly used in the Rhone. These large barrels preserve the vineyard character by minimizing both oak extraction and oxidation. It is bottled **unfined** and **unfiltered**.

STYLE/DESCRIPTION: Clearly our most concentrated, full-bodied and complex Grenache blend to date. The quality of our Mourvedre really shows in this wine. In fact, it is the reason for making this wine separate from the rest of our Grenache. It has intense aromatics of pepper, raspberry, blackberry, tar, licorice, and dried herbs. On the palate it has a juicy, silky texture with firm but entirely ripe tannins and outstanding acid balance. This is the closest we've come to the "Holy Grail" of making Chateauneuf du Pape style wine. It has the stuff to last at least 5 to 7 years, but should really start showing its stuff in 2 years.

Mick

Harvested: 10/20/05 through 10/26/05

Total acidity: 0.63g/100ml

pH: 3.70

Aging: 13 mos.in a 620 gal French oak foudre

Blend: 65% Grenache, 25% Mourvedre, 10% Syrah

Alcohol: 14.9%

Bottled: 12/5/06

Cases Produced: 260