



2005 DIERBERG VINEYARD SYRAH SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

VINTAGE NOTES

Record-setting winter storms beginning in November 2004 and continuing through late May 2005 saw Star Lane receive over 32 inches of rain as opposed to our normal 13! Additionally, several frosts in late March and April had us running our sprinklers (used as frost protection) for 3 to 4 hours each morning, further contributing to the total accumulated water received at the ranch. Needless to say, the soils in the vineyard started at what we call “field capacity,” meaning that the entire soil profile was saturated to its maximum water-holding potential. Badly needed, the extremely wet weather leached out several years of salts that had built up in soils during the proceeding drought years. The vines started the growing season healthy and happy, enjoyed moderate weather through the spring and set a very good crop—in excess of three tons per acre, which is enormous for Star Lane. Occasional heat spells punctuated the otherwise moderate summer months, promoting even, and expedient ripening. During a very quick and even veraison we adjusted our crop load down to an average of 2.5 tons to the acre and sailed into a leisurely harvest, making all of our picking decisions based upon ripeness as opposed to weather events. In a word, perfect!

VINEYARD NOTES

Our vineyard, located at the far eastern end of the Santa Ynez Valley, is both the warmest and the highest elevation vineyard in the appellation. Backing up to the lower slopes of the San Rafael Mountains which loom high above the ranch, our Santa Ynez ranch features a unique range of weathered sand, gravel and alluvial cobbles over a clay/loam subsoil. We chose the coldest and windiest portion of our

vineyard as the home for our limited plantings of Syrah, feeling that this more extreme microclimate would help focus and refine the rich flavors we generally expect from the ranch. The upper portion the Syrah block, planted to clone 838 on IOI-14 rootings has a lighter textured soil—largely sandy loam—with a moderate amount of golf ball-sized stones. The lower portion, planted to clone 877 also on IOI-14 rootings, stretches down towards the creek bed and offers a more weathered gravel profile. Both areas are very well drained. The Syrah is managed without the use of chemical herbicides and only small amounts of sulfur and copper are used for mildew and botrytis control. Both products are certified organic.

WINEMAKING NOTES

Each fermentor is filled with hand sorted, destemmed and only lightly crushed fruit. Generally, 20% whole clusters are retained to help emphasize the more savory flavors that our vineyard tends to produce. Three to five days of cold soak is followed by a moderately warm fermentation with native yeast only. At the end of active fermentation, the must is heated to 95°Fahrenheit for three days to extract every last bit of color, flavor and phenolic material that the grapes have to offer. Free run wine is moved to barrel “dirty,” meaning that much of the fermentation lees are kept in contact with the wine and an uninoculated malolactic fermentation typically finishes in the late spring following harvest. After 22 months in 2 year old demi-muids (158 gallon barrels) and a light fining with fresh egg whites, the 2005 Dierberg Syrah was bottled unfiltered.

TASTING NOTES

Our 2005 Syrah is a big yet very supple wine. Nearly opaque in color, with maroon highlights, it is very impressive in the glass. Aromas of grilled meat, blackberry, black cherry, smoke, espresso and lavender are complemented by similar, very rich flavors. The wine is enormous in the mouth—an “Adult Portion” as we like to say—but it retains a sense of elegance, grace and vibrancy that is uncommon for such Syrahs. Gratifying now, this wine will continue to improve through for another 4 to 6 years.

Composition: 100% Syrah

Appellation: Santa Ynez Valley

Alcohol: 15.1 %

pH: 3.98

Total Acid: 4.1 g/L

DIERBERG

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