

Cycles GLADIATOR

2013 PETITE SIRAH



So just what is Petite Sirah? Where did it come from? This is probably a question many of you already know the answer to but it can't hurt to have a little refresher course considering my Cycles-Gladiator team and I are putting a heavy emphasis on making a great bottle of this dynamic grape. You'll be hearing a lot from us in the near future about this offering. The varietal was first produced in the 1860's in the nursery of French Botanist François Durif when the pollen of Syrah cross-pollinated the flower from a Peloursin vine. Durif discovered this new vine growing in his nursery and had it positively identified as such in 1868 by French ampelographer Victor Pulliat who named the vine Plant du Rif which was later renamed Durif. Despite its natural resistance to certain vine pressures, the grapes' perceived low quality led to the varietal's near-extinction in France. Today, it is found almost in entirety between California and Australia. Early California plantings in the 1880's by growers believing the grape to be Syrah yielded the name Petite Sirah as a result of the berries being considerably smaller than Syrah grapes. Although there is a bit of conjecture as to whether all Petite Sirah is Durif and visa versa, the fact remains that the Federal Government recognizes the two as synonyms for each other and can be named either way on a bottle of wine.

Despite its predilection towards rotting on the vine, Petite Sirah seems perfectly suited for the Central Coast appellations I make this wine from. Paso Robles and the Livermore Valley see very warm days and cool nights, allowing for a considerably dry growing season and, consequently, the ability to reach sugar levels that may be difficult to achieve in other regions. I've worked with the grape for over 20 years and am convinced that both Paso and the Livermore Valley can produce some of the richest, most intense wines you can find in California. I generally pick on flavor and acid when it comes to Petite Sirah and am thrilled to be able to let the grape hang until the flavors are there rather than having to make a decision based upon whether or not the vine is going to shut down prematurely or the berries are going to rot. The intensity of the 2013 vintage led me to decide to blend in about 18% Syrah for the sole reason that the wine was too over-the-top and needed to be "toned down" a bit. The little splash of red fruit flavors didn't hurt either.

Varietal:
82% Petite Sirah,
18% Syrah

Appellation:
100% Central Coast

TA: 0.62 gms/100ml

pH: 3.68

Alcohol: 15%

Oak regimen:
35% new American,
5% New French,
balance neutral oak

This is a particularly dark, brooding wine with aromatics of boysenberry and blueberry tied together with sweet cedar and vanilla notes from the new oak. Plum, blackberry, and other black fruit flavors up front. The tannins are pretty immense but the depth of lush fruit on the midpalate mitigate any perception of astringency. The result is a mouthfilling expression of dark fruits that wrap around the tongue and coat the whole mouth. This is a wine that will stain your soul. The typical food pairing default would be a beef or pork tenderloin and that would be correct. But I would also consider trying it with a cave-aged gruyere or other crystallized cheese. And of course, no Petite Sirah tasting notes would be complete unless there is some mention of pairing this wine with a hamburger. With mushrooms. And cheese. And bacon. Yes, lots and lots of bacon. Mmmm...bacon.

Cheers,

Adam LaZarre . Winemaker