



2008 Syrah - Rock Hollow Vineyard

Right down the road from the town of Los Olivos is an even smaller hamlet called Ballard. Blink and you'll miss it, as the saying goes. It's here, in a picturesque nook in the heart of the Santa Ynez Valley, that Adam and Kate Firestone planted their Rock Hollow Vineyard. This vineyard's shallow rocky soils, sloping topography and excellent natural drainage combine to yield a complex, intensely flavored Syrah with a velvety black fruit character.

Tasting Notes

The 2008 Syrah from Rock Hollow Vineyard begins with bold aromas of black cherry and vanilla with hints of leather. The palate unfolds with deep, layered flavors of plum, cherry and blackberry. Accents of boysenberry and dark coffee join firm tannins on a smooth, structured finish. Enjoy this wine for up to the next five years.

Winemaking

Small yields in 2008 brought excellent flavor intensity with depth and structure. The grapes were hand picked and sorted on October 25. The must was cold soaked for four days prior to fermentation for gentle extraction of color and flavor. The wine was lightly pressed in a traditional wooden basket press and aged for 18 months in French oak barrels, 40 percent of which featured new oak.

Food Pairing

The rich, intense flavors of this Syrah are a nice match for filet mignon in mushroom sauce, rack of lamb with rosemary seasoning, and the classic Santa Maria Style Barbecue preparation featured in this newsletter.



Calypso's Chop

Dear Friends:

As I write, it seems that spring has finally sprung in the Santa Ynez Valley, as the first true warmth of the season has arrived.

We enjoyed an incredible winter with abundant rainfall and steady dormancy in the vineyard. Now the warm weather has suddenly kicked the awakening vines into high gear. The vine buds are opening and growing, showing the first growth of what will become the 2011 vintage. It almost seems like you can drive by the vines in the morning and then again in the later afternoon, and everything looks like it has grown a bit in just those few hours.

We are rapidly getting our cover crop mowed. Soon we will settle into our annual vineyard cultivation pattern, which includes protecting the vine growth from mildew and thinning the shoots as needed. Shoot thinning helps open up the canopy, allowing more sunlight into the fruiting zone to achieve balanced physiological ripeness.

This year, Ernst and I will run some vineyard experiments that will help us tap into the full potential of some of our blocks. We are going to "trick out" several blocks of Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. We are going to really babysit and micromanage these blocks throughout the growing season.

When the fruit is harvested, we will take a similar approach in the cellar. We apply a lot of hands-on attention to all of our wines, but these ones are going to get even more. Where that will take us is hard to say, but we look forward to sharing the fruits of our labors with you.

Chuck Carlson



2010 Heritage Rosé - Santa Barbara County

The 2010 Heritage Rosé introduces a brand new look for our Heritage Series, but it's the same wine you've come to know and love—a dry, Rhône-style rosé that is a perfect match for seasonal summer fare and warm, festive evenings. This wine is modeled after the classic dry rosés of the southern Rhône Valley, which are a staple of Mediterranean hospitality. The 2010 vintage is blend of Grenache (38%), Mourvèdre (30%), Cinsault (20%) and Syrah (12%), all from our estate vineyard.

Tasting Notes

The 2010 Heritage Rosé opens with pretty aromas of red fruits and citrus. Bright flavors of strawberry, watermelon and raspberry anticipate a crisp, dry finish. This wine is made to be enjoyed in its youth, from the festive summer months through the holidays.

Winemaking

The individual lots were withdrawn from the corresponding varietal fermenters after a 24-hour cold soak. The lots were combined and cold-fermented for an extended period to retain a fresh fruit profile and bright aromatics. The wine was aged in stainless steel, with lees contact for two months to build enhanced mouthfeel.

Food Pairing

The bright profile and dry finish of the 2010 Heritage Rosé are a fine match for summer seasonal fare, including light salads, barbecued chicken and classic picnic foods. This wine also goes well with many Asian dishes.

NEWS FROM THE RHÔNE ZONE

New Look for Heritage Series

The 2010 Heritage Rosé in this shipment inaugurates a new label for our Heritage Series wines. Our aim was to establish a fresh look while retaining familiar elements that represent our roots. On that note, we have enrolled the existing Curtis font and grape cluster motif into a bolder, more colorful palette. We like to say that our Heritage Series wines are born of the sun, forged by the soil and offered in a spirit of everyday enjoyment. We feel that the new label artfully expresses this philosophy. But enough about what we think—we'd like to get your feedback, too! So please email us at

info@curtiswinery.com or look us up on Facebook to share your thoughts.

Hop on "The Wine Line"

Tired of driving (and pumping gas)? Now you have a new way to tour the Santa Ynez Valley wine country—The Wine Line shuttle service, which allows you to "taste wine at the wineries you choose, when you want, at your own pace." In other words, you can hop on and off at any local winery, and by the time you are ready to go, another shuttle will be waiting or close to arriving (they come by every 40 minutes). They will also pick you up from local hotels.

Visit www.hoponthewineline.com or call (888) 994-6354 for information.

Grenache Hits Home Runs

The New York Yankees weren't the only ones hitting home runs this spring. Our 2007 Grenache earned 93 points in Wine & Spirits and 92 points in the Tasting Panel Magazine. These accolades follow a gold medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition and a score of 90 points at the California State Fair Wine Competition. You received this delicious Grenache in an earlier Cellar Crew shipment, but there might still be a little left by the time this newsletter reaches you. Hint, hint!



Crew Cellars

In this new feature, we turn the spotlight on the personal cellars of Cellar Crew members. Would you like to nominate your own? If so, email elizabeth@curtiswinery.com.

Jamie and Lynnell Caldwell are long-time Cellar Crew members who consider the Santa Ynez Valley their home away from home. Residents of the Southern California city of Glendora, Jamie and Lynnell make frequent trips to the Santa Barbara County wine country, often visiting Curtis Winery with their two dogs in tow. Two years ago, Jamie decided to act on his long-held dream of building a wine cellar in their back house. He did most of the work himself, and he installed a Whisper Cool system to maintain a constant cellar temperature of 54 degrees. "We just inventoried our wines," Lynnell says, "and we were surprised to find that we have close to 300 bottles." Among them is a bottle of the 1998 Curtis Reserve Syrah, which they plan to uncork on their upcoming 29th wedding anniversary. "Our hope and dream is to move to the Santa Ynez Valley after retirement in a few years and Jamie will pursue his hobby as a photographer," Lynnell says. In the meantime, they certainly won't be short on local wines!

Crew Food

Classic Santa Maria Style Barbecue

In the Santa Ynez Valley, we're fortunate to have a remarkable regional culinary tradition right in our own backyard: Santa Maria Style Barbecue. Based on native ingredients and methods, Santa Maria Style Barbecue has been hailed by Sunset Magazine as "the best barbecue in the world." It's a great match for local red wines, including our 2008 Syrah from Rock Hollow Vineyard. The following recipe is courtesy of the Official Santa Maria Valley Barbecue Blog at www.santamariavalleybbq.com.

Ingredients and Method

Create your Santa Maria Style Barbecue rub by mixing one tablespoon of salt with 1/2 teaspoon of black pepper and 1/2 teaspoon of garlic salt (for larger cuts and portions, increase ingredients proportionately).

Purchase premium top-block sirloin or tri-tip. Do not trim fat before putting the meat on the grill!

Sprinkle rub evenly across meat. For larger cuts, roll meat in rub, covering the entire surface.

Fill your grill with red oak or other high-quality fuel, avoiding cheap paraffin charcoal. Wait until the coals are red hot with very little flame; spread them out evenly.

Quickly sear meat to seal in flavorful juices, starting with the fat side, then raise barbecue pit screen to prevent burning. When juice appears at the top of the meat, it is time to turn it over. Cook until desired doneness. Medium rare is recommended—which typically takes 20 minutes per inch of cut thickness.

You may trim the fat after cooking. For tri-tip, slice against the grain the long way,

not across the triangle. It won't be a uniform cut, but it will be more tender.

Serve with Santa Maria-style salsa, pinto beans and tossed green salad. Finish with Santa Maria-grown strawberry dessert.

