



Winery & Vineyards

2002 SYRAH “BLACK LABEL CUVEE”

Central Coast

Winemaker's Notes:

Regarding the 2000 & 2001 Black Label Syrahs, I wrote:

“These wines let your palate explore the realm of a dark, hedonistic, chocolatey fruit syrup, but they never let you get stuck in it like quicksand. Intense blackberry resonates throughout these wines, and in their bouquets are Syrah's trophy elements of pepper, and violets.”

Well, with the 2002 bottling, the pepper and the violets still exists, but the more overtly massive qualities of the prior wines have given way to something more delicate. This wine is not the dense spectacle that its predecessors were; it's not the syrup. The tannins feather out more across the palate, and the fruit pulls back form a blackberry character to more of a boysenberry impression. Why is this you might ask? Because for the first time, the Black Label Syrah has an influence from soils rich in limestone. In a word, it has an influence from *Paso Robles*.

Now, don't panic, this is still the Black Label Syrah. It's still a big wine. Having no residual sugar, it's technically a dry wine, but the coalescing of concentrated fruit, higher alcohol, and new French Oak does still give the taster an impression of layers of *sweet*, exotic fruit. In fact, there is something about this wine at its core that is very captivating. The flavor is simply beautiful. Being a blend, you don't taste the pedigree of a great single vineyard; you taste the upward potential for the variety Syrah as it is grown on California's Central Coast. Being slightly more slender than past bottlings, this one will ultimately be more versatile with more kinds of food. While this Black Label Syrah captures a little bit of the powerful ripeness of the past, it also captures a more transparent expression of varietal character and the coming together of great terroir.

Technical Notes:

VARIETAL COMPOSITION: 96% Syrah; 4% Sangiovese

VINEYARDS: SYRAH:

36% Alisos Vineyard, Los Alamos, Santa Barbara County

21% Babcock Estate, Santa Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County

20% Carriage Vineyard, Templeton, San Luis Obispo County

8% Larner Vineyard, Ballard Canyon, Santa Ynez Valley

7% Hearthstone Vineyard, Paso Robles, San Luis Obispo County

3% Moss Vineyard, Paso Robles, San Luis Obispo County

1% Thompson Vineyard, Los Alamos, Santa Barbara County

SANGIOVESE:

4% Eleven Oaks Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County

FINISHED WINE: Residual Sugar: Dry pH: 3.58 TA: 6.7 g/L Alcohol: 13.5%

TIME IN BARRELS: 18 months

BOTTLING DATE: April 2004

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 1,320 cases 12/750 ML

RELEASE DATE: Fall, 2005