

## ***OUR FAVORITE PETS***

BY MIKE DUNNE

Earlier today, I noted here that the panel on which I am sitting at the Riverside International Wine Competition was given the assignment of judging petite sirahs by region of origin, in contrast to the usual practice of lumping all entries regardless of appellation into a single random class.

I'm not going to try to digest all my notes now, but I do want to give a brief update. We judged 51 petite sirahs. They represented more than 20 appellations. We gave nine gold medals. Three of the golds were given to wines from just one appellation - Livermore Valley. No other appellation got more than one gold medal.

A few decades ago, the Livermore Valley's Concannon Vineyard more or less set the standard for petite sirah in California. That isn't the case today, though I won't be surprised if one Concannon petite sirah were among the gold medalists. (We won't learn the identities of any of the producers until after the final sweepstakes round late Friday.)

Do the results mean that Livermore Valley is the region to look to for California's most exciting petite sirahs? Not necessarily. Our single sweepstakes nominee from the petite-sirah class was a downright glorious interpretation of the varietal from Russian River Valley in Sonoma County. And while I liked the Livermore Valley petite sirahs, they didn't get my most enthusiastic votes for gold. That Russian River Valley petite sirah, however, struck me as a winner from the very first sniff. I look forward to learning the identity of the producer, and the price, hoping it's within my budget.

