

As Seen in...  
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## ***PETITE SIRAH THE NEXT GREAT-VALUE RED?***

By Mary Ross

While prices of Zinfandel continue to rise, Petite Sirah is poised to become America's next great-value red.

In wine tomes, Petite Sirah is catalogued as Durif, named for Francois Durif, a French nurseryman, who crossed the Peloursin grape and an unknown pollen source (now known to be Syrah), to yield fruit resistant to downy mildew. The grape was tolerated, not encouraged, in French vineyards and eventually uprooted altogether.

Like many immigrants, Durif found a new home and a new name in California. Planting flourished during Prohibition, as the tough-skinned grape withstood packing in boxcars headed East to home winemakers; after the Repeal, its inky color, robust berry flavor and tannin - enough to take paint off the barn - were hearty additions to popular "California Chianti"-type jugs.

Petite Sirah's fan base shrank again during the 1970s wine boom, as palates turned to the more refined flavors of Cabernet Sauvignon, then Merlot, then Pinot Noir, then Zinfandel.

But a few loyalists remained. In 2002, longtime grower Lou Foppiano organized "P.S. I Love You," an advocacy group to raise quality and awareness of Petite Sirah, much as Z.A.P. (Zinfandel Advocates and Producers) did for Zinfandel.

Today, winemakers are taming the grape's powerful tannin and attracting fans with a mouthful of meaty, plummy flavors, in higher-priced labels (Bruce, Stags Leap, Rosenblum, Foppiano... around \$20) and great values (Bogle...around \$10.)

Serve P.S. with flavorful meats and the richest poultry, especially rustic stews such as chili, jambalaya and meat curries. Visit [psiloveyou.org/recipes.php](http://psiloveyou.org/recipes.php) for more stick-to-the-ribs dishes.

