

As Seen in...

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## ***SIMILAR IN NAME, NOT THE SAME***

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The question comes up often: Are syrah and petite sirah the same wines?

Petite sirah, also known as durif, is often used as a blending grape and, although it is not commonly bottled as a single-grape varietal, when it is, it creates a unique, bold and interesting wine.

It has a dense, inky quality with intense black fruit flavors.

In fact, there isn't much about it I would describe as petite. If you like big, intense red wines, you will like petite sirah.

The syrah grape, however, is more frequently used to make single-grape variety wine and creates a more moderately powerful wine compared to petite sirah.

There is a distant DNA connection between the two grapes, but they are generally regarded as two distinct grapes.

Syrah's true home is acknowledged to be a region of France called the Northern Rhone. It is in the lower eastern section of the country and it is defined by the north-south-running Rhone River.

The most famous French wine from this region that is made from syrah is called Hermitage and the style represents syrah's potential as a dense, dark and spicy wine, with a

deep ruby color.

Its bold, peppery flavors make syrah a popular choice to serve with strong flavorful foods such as game and stews.

In Australia, the syrah grape is known as shiraz, and it has become Australia's trademark red grape.

Australian wine producers, as well as American winemakers, have also blended syrah with another black grape — cabernet sauvignon — with tremendous success. It is complex and tannic and will age well for many years, possibly decades.

In California, the one region becoming known for its quality wines made with syrah is the Central Coast, particularly the areas of Paso Robles and Santa Maria, and extending into Santa Barbara County and the Santa Ynez area.

Wines from this region represent the richness of syrah at easily affordable prices.

— Len Napolitano lives in Central Coast wine country and believes the more you understand wine, the more you enjoy it. He is certified in wine by the Society of Wine Educators, Wine & Spirits Education Trust, and Chicago Wine School. More information is on his Web site, at <http://www.wineology.com>. Send your questions about wine to [wineologist@earthlink.net](mailto:wineologist@earthlink.net).

