

Tasting Highlights: California Petite Sirah A dozen big Golden State reds that won't take a big toll on your wallet

MaryAnn Worobiec

Petite Sirah is known for its personality: a dense and muscular red that stands out for chewy tannins and bold flavors. This group of Petite Sirah isn't shy on personality or taste, and includes some great examples priced at less than \$20.

Artezin is a label from Napa's Hess Collection winery. Here they use Petite Sirah from Mendocino's Ukiah Valley, including a vineyard with vines planted in the 1940s. There's also a pair from Robert Biale, a name most Petite Sirah lovers will be familiar with. The Thomann Station comes from a single vineyard in St. Helena while the Royal Punishers bottling blends several parcels from all over NapaOak Knoll, Calistoga, St. Helena and Rutherford.

Two labels stood out from the pack when the bags came off in our blind tasting, including ...The Petite Petit from Michael & David Phillips (the same guys who introduced 7 Deadly Zins and Earthquake Cab) has a very colorful label featuring a couple of circus elephants and discusses the unusual pairing of Petite Sirah with Bordeaux varietal Petit Verdot.

PS I Love You Member wine:

ARTEZIN Petite Sirah Mendocino Garzini Ranch 2006 Score: 92 | \$36

Fragrant pepper and violet notes mingle nicely with the generous core of ripe blackberry, currant and boysenberry. Accents of spice, tobacco, vanilla and cedar fill in on the long, delicious finish. Drink now through 2013. 171 cases made. M.W.

ROBERT BIALE Petite Sirah Napa Valley Royal Punishers 2006 Score: 92 | \$44

An intense, focused mouthful of ripe blackberry, huckleberry and boysenberry flavors, with thick tannins and wonderful details of mineral, cedar, tobacco and spice box nuances that follow through on the long finish. Drink now through 2014. 700 cases made. M.W.

ROBERT BIALE Petite Sirah St. Helena Thomann Station 2006 Score: 90 | \$50

Dark, concentrated and focused, with nice peppery accents to the blackberry syrup, espresso and cassis flavors. Thickly tannic, this fills the mouth with spice, mineral and cedar notes on the finish. Drink now through 2014. 400 cases made. M.W.

GIRARD Petite Sirah Napa Valley 2007 Score: 89 | \$28

Blackberry, huckleberry and pepper notes are firm and taut, concentrated and densely tannic. The fruit flavors are ripe and come with a juicy, pomegranate-like edge. Drink now through 2014. 4,732 cases made. M.W.

PARDUCCI Petite Sirah Mendocino County 2006 Score: 86 | \$11

There's a nice brightness to the red fruit flavors in this medium-bodied red, which has a chew to the tannins and a spice, mineral and floral note. Drink now through 2012. 12,600 cases made. M.W.

MICHAEL & DAVID PHILLIPS Petite Petit Lodi 2007 Score: 86 | \$18

Extremely spicy aromatics clove, nutmeg, allspice and cinnamon. Mingled with the smooth and tasty juicy cherry and berry flavors, this takes on a more cedary edge. An interesting and fun interpretation. Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot. Drink now. 18,000 cases made. M.W.

