

## **GOOD LIVING: THE INGREDIENTS ARE SIMPLE**

### **PETITE SIRAH TASTING**

BY STEVE MCINTOSH

Bottom Line: Six Petites as different as different as chalk and cheese. One clear favorite and a pack of debate-worthy wines.

(Note: Please see the replies from the first and last place wineries at the bottom of this review.)

The Rest of The Story: (Full disclosure: These wines were received as press samples.) Petite Sirah doesn't necessarily suffer from a bad reputation as much as it suffers from no reputation. And, despite the confession above, it's sadly under-represented in our reviews. It is an under-rated, under-appreciated grape. Well, starting with this article, we're going to do our part to help change that.

So, we conducted a blind group tasting of six Petite Sirahs that were selected at random. The panel consisted of seven seasoned wine drinkers who were given no information about the wines. Pasta, was served, glasses were poured, and laughter ensued. If you're looking for what makes for good living, the ingredients are simple: pasta, friends, and Petite Sirah.

Before we get into the results, a quick word about the field. We ended up with wines ranging in price from \$7 to \$45 - which is like putting Steve Urkel in a cage match with Evander Holyfield - hardly fair. But since the selection was blind, that's just how the cards fell. So bear that in mind...

Overall, these wines were very different from one another - illustrating the great variability in style this varietal can possess.

1st Place: Far and away the crowd favorite was the 2007 Stanton Vineyards Saint

Helena Petite Sirah. At \$45, it's pricey, but a hell of a wine. Intense, balanced, lovely. A head-turner that stopped us all dead in our tracks.

2nd Place was a tie for:

\* The 2006 EOS Petite Sirah Reserve Paso Robles, which became known as the "quiet wine" for its suppleness. Beautiful and so smooth. A quality product. Hard to appreciate in this boisterous lineup, but worth returning to. MSRP is \$25, but can be found online for around \$20.

\* The 2007 Mounts Family Winery Petite Sirah from Dry Creek Valley has big fruit up-front. Really easy to enjoy, but needs a lot of time to breathe. \$32

Third place followed closely for:

\* The 2007 Concannon Petite Sirah from the Livermore Valley. Perfectly fine, but no standout in this crowd. Landed in this group for its sheer gulp-ability. \$12

\* The 2008 Line 39 Petite Sirah North Coast. Soft Ozzy influences on a simple frame on par with it's third place companion. \$10.

Finally, the hands down last place finisher no one seemed to reach for (even at the end of the night) was the Steve Urkel of the crowd, the 2008 Red Tree Petite Sirah California, the slouch in this line up and a flabby fruit bomb. But let's be fair, what do you expect for \$7?

Stay tuned for more coverage on this lovable varietal...



In response to this review, Roy Cecchetti, President and Owner of Cecchetti Wine Company, makers of Line 39 and Redtree wines, said this:

Thanks for including our wines in your review of Petite Sirah.

Since Petite Sirah is a somewhat obscure varietal, especially with the novice wine consumer, the wine needs to be priced fairly so the consumer can be introduced to this new varietal. The under \$10 wine drinker (let's face it, this is the new reality in the wine business) is not going to spend \$45, or even \$20, to experiment on a new varietal that he or she knows nothing about. This is why we introduced Redtree Petite Sirah, which is a lighter, though varietally correct wine at \$7.99 which doesn't break the bank to try something different. Can this wine stand up against \$20 and up Petite Sirahs? Absolutely not. However, I can guarantee you that if this under \$10 wine consumer were to taste an expensive Petite Sirah, they would hate it. Without knowing anything about the varietal, these expensive Petite Sirahs will be harsh, tannic and overpowering. However, Redtree, and even our Line 39, are a bit softer but rich in Petite Sirah flavor.

Cecchetti Wine Company is a "value" producer. I have been in this business for over 25 years and have always made very approachable, varietally correct, fruit forward wines of value. I often say the if someone gave me a \$50 bottle of wine to sell I wouldn't know what to do.

Thanks again for including us in your review.

Regards,  
Roy

Great points, Roy. Thanks!

Also in response to this review, Doug Stanton, Owner of Stanton Vineyards, maker of the head-turning St Helena Petite in this tasting, said this:

Those are some very kind words about my 07 Petite sirah- thank you The total case production was 300 cases, I currently have about 50 cases left, if any of your readers would like to order they might visit my web site: <http://www.stantonvineyards.com/>. In addition to the petite sirah I also make an estate Oakville Napa valley cabernet...

Sincerely, Doug Stanton