

The Wine Investor BUYER'S GUIDE

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All prices are, unless described otherwise, California full-markup retail (i.e., single-case wholesale per bottle plus 50%) for 750 ml. except contributing editors, who report actual shelf price.

Estimates of wines' longevity are based on comparisons with other wines in the tasters' experience; while these estimates are offered in good faith, they cannot be guaranteed, and they should not be regarded as definitive.

RATINGS

(*)=Palatable

(**)=Noteworthy

(***)=World-class

(****)=Go out of your way to taste

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The *Informed Enophile* is written by
J. D. Kronman.

We sometimes print more than one review of a given wine, possibly in different issues. When this occurs it is because more than one contributor has tasted the wine. We believe that showing you diverse opinions is of more use than giving you only one opinion.

BEST BUYS Among the wines reviewed in this issue, these are regarded as unusually good values.

- *** **Arrowfield** 2006 Orange *Fat Tree* Semillon-Sauv Blanc \$9.00
- *** **Hope** 2005 Hunter Valley Chard \$10.00
- ** **Parducci** 2004 Mendocino Petite Sirah \$10.00
- *** **RVino** 2006 Aus *Leaf Spring* Chard \$10.00
- *** **Rolling** 2005 NSW Sauv Blanc Semillon \$10.00
- *** **McWilliams** 2004 South East Australia *Hanwood* Chard \$12.00
- *** **McWilliams** 2005 South East Australia *Hanwood* Rslg \$12.00
- *** **St Hallett** 2006 Barossa *Poacher's Blend* Semillon-Sauv Blanc \$12.00
- *** **Concannon** 2004 Central Coast *Limited Release* Petite Sirah \$14.00
- **** **Foppiano** 2003 Russian River Reserve Petite Sirah \$23.00

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The Informed Enophile

By J D Kronman

Focus On: Australia

An Australian trade delegation was in Los Angeles for a *G'Day LA* event and shortly thereafter I spent several weeks in Australia – alas, not on a wine mission but I did manage to taste more than a few wines. Here are my notes from both experiences. Prices are U.S. unless qualified by AU\$. Disclaimer: sometimes the information I got from the tasting station at the L.A. event conflicted with the information in the printed tasting program; in the event of such conflicts I am reporting what was printed in the program. As in past reports from down under, a few of these wines are from the cellars of my friends and not commercially available in regular retail channels. There were far too many wines to fit into one issue so this report will continue next month.

Focus On: Petite Sirah

There has been a lot of discussion about Petite Sirah's origins. For a long time, the grape was thought, despite its name, to be unrelated to Syrah; Petite Sirah was believed to actually be Durif, a red grape variety found in southern France. DNA research now shows Petite Sirah and Syrah are related. A study done at the UC Davis determined Petite Sirah is indeed Durif, and that Durif is a cross between Peloursin and Syrah.

**** **Stags' Leap** 2003 Napa Petite Sirah \$38.00 Now-2018

The best wine in a tasting of 26 Petite Sirahs. This is to be expected as Stags' Leap, along with Foppiano, are Petite Sirah specialists and have built their well-deserved reputations on wines made from this grape. Well-balanced with delicious flavor of berries, mint, mocha and spice. Very complex, layered and lengthy. Yum Yum!

**** **Foppiano** 2003 Russian River Reserve Petite Sirah \$23.00 Now-2017 **BEST BUY**

A big wine that is so well-balanced one does not notice the massive structure and depth. A wine to be savored by itself or with food. Deep purple in color with notes of chocolate, mint, berries and spice.

*** **Eos** 2004 Paso Robles *Reserve* Petite Sirah \$25.00 Now-2016

Very spicy with pepper, herbal and chocolate notes in abundance. There is an intense fruitiness to the wine that covers the tannins and the toasted oak. Big and brawny with mouth-watering acidity and a long lingering finish.

*** **Lolonis** 2003 Redwood Valley *Sisters Blend* Petite Sirah \$32.00 Now-2015

A lovely wine with depth and complexity. The texture is big and rustic with ripe fruit and flavors of blackberries, tobacco, mocha and leather. These same flavors with a hint of smoke follow through on the palate and in the finish.

*** **Parducci** 2003 Mendocino *True Grit* Petite Sirah \$25.00 Now-2015

Flavorful and well-balanced, it is dense, deep, dark with a lot of complexity. The red berry fruits are matched with a white pepper and vanilla character both to the nose and in the mouth. An intense fruity finish.

*** **Ehrhardt** 2004 Clarksburg Petite Sirah \$26.00 Now-2016

Deep, rich and full-bodied, loaded with cranberry and cherry fruit. On the nose I also detected herbs, spice and vanilla. The texture is rounded and the taste shows stewed fruits and black licorice.

*** **Concannon** 2004 Central Coast *Limited Release* Petite Sirah \$14.00 Now-2016 **BEST BUY**

Light weight but the juicy rounded texture and delicious flavors more than make up for a lack of heft. A elegant wine (if any Petite Sirah can actually be elegant). One finds plums, cherries, and soft tannins. Balanced and a lengthy finish.

** **Lolonis** 2002 Redwood Valley *Orpheus Organically Grown* Petite Sirah \$32.00 Now-2012

To the nose the wine seems old and tired (maybe it was the bottle) but the flavors are lively and spicy. In the aforementioned tasting some felt it tasted more like Cab and others thought it was more like Gamay. There are notes of cherries and plums, but the texture of Petite Sirah was absent.

** **Lava Cap** 2003 El Dorado Granite Hill *Reserve* Petite Sirah \$30.00 Now-2016

A big wine with sweet ripe fruit. There is a slight off-taste in the mid-palate but the entry and finish are delightful. Spice and espresso are well suited to the ripe cherry flavors. One can also find anise and mint.

** **Oak Grove** 2004 *Reserve* Petite Sirah \$9.00 Now-2013

An entry level wine with no flaws but no highs. A well-made, balanced and soft wine with a floral nose. Easy to drink and juicy in texture. Not as spicy as some others of this varietal but there is a firm grip and a

good finish.

**** Victor Hugo** 2004 Paso Robles Petite Sirah \$18.00 Now-2014

Another soft and easy drinking wine. It is full-bodied and juicy but lighter than expected. There is an abundance of sweet fruit that produces a flavorful wine with a pleasant fruity and chocolate nose.

**** Eos** 2003 Paso Robles Petite Sirah \$18.00 Now-2015

The wine is lovely but lacks depth and concentration. The fruit is bright and juicy, with good acid. The nose shows mint, berries, pepper and coffee. Don't pair with a steak but with a nice cheese or a roast pork.

**** Parducci** 2004 Mendocino Petite Sirah \$10.00 Now-2012 **BEST BUY**

A perfectly acceptable wine with depth of fruit and good acid. A bit raw but the sweet fruit more than compensates. Still some tannins but it is so spicy and the finish is fruity and long.

**** Earthquake** 2004 Lodi Petite Sirah \$28.00 2010-2018

I found a lot of mocha and butterscotch in the aroma along with smoke and some spice. This is a big wine with a lot of tannin and briary fruit. Very dense and concentrated. If you like big wines, try this one.

**** Rosenblum** 2004 Mendocino Redwood Valley Rhodes Vineyard Petite Sirah \$25.00 Now-2014

Spicy with orange zest and plummy notes to the nose. Sweet fruit roasted coffee bean and a lot of toasty oak are found on the palate, followed by a peppery finish. Fleshy and not as bright as I expected.

**** David Bruce** 2003 Paso Robles Shell Creek Petite Sirah \$27.00 Now-2013

Notes of celery to the nose. One can find some orange zest and minerals in the taste. A monotone wine with good acidity.

**** Trentadue** 2003 Alex Valley La Storia Petite Sirah \$28.00 Now-2016

La Storia is the name for the winery's line of reserve wines. The wine seems harsh and there appears to be a lot of charred oak. It is dense and extracted with chocolate, tobacco and molasses. A wine that cries out for a steak.

**** Eos** 2003 Paso Robles *Cupa Grandis* Petite Sirah \$55.00 Now-2016

Sweet fruit and highly extracted, there is good acid and solid herbal notes. Spicy and dense. The ripe fruit is accented by hints of mint, dark coffee and black pepper. A big wine, not for the faint of heart.

**** Eos** 2003 Paso Robles *Novella* Petite Sirah \$12.00 Now-2010

Too light but with a nice bouquet of spice and mint. Very drinkable and easy to sip and like. Extracted but not overly so and a soft rounded texture. Enjoyable but don't expect to be wowed.

*** Trentadue** 2004 North Coast Petite Sirah \$15.00 Now-2014

The winery's first non-estate Petite Sirah, the grapes are sourced from Mendocino and Lake counties. The wine is pleasant but oh so light and soft. The dark color hints at massive fruit, but that expectation is not found by the palate. Easy drinking and certainly quaffable.