



POTENT AND POWERFUL PETITE SIRAH

By Ellen Landis

Huge, monstrous, yet called petite? The only thing petite about this varietal is the size of the berry (about half the size of syrah berries!) Maybe you are not clear about the difference between petite sirah and syrah? Let me help solve the mystery! Petite Sirah (also called Durif) is the offspring of syrah. Petite Sirah's two parents are syrah and peloursin.

I love this big bold varietal - it's ripe fruit and spicy characteristics on the nose carry through with explosive flavors on the palate; and it is one of the most age-worthy wine varietals produced in the new world. It can be smooth and voluptuous on the palate, yet showcase big, firm tannins that give it such longevity. A balance of fruit and tannins is part of the secret of this amazing varietal. Below are a few gems I've recently tasted:

Bogle Merritt Island 2004 Reserve Petite Sirah

Opens with brilliantly focused blackberry and vanilla aromas leading to a smooth, abundantly satisfying entry. Lively spice notes frame layers of succulent blackberry, black raspberry and black currant flavors on mid palate. Nicely integrated oak with pretty vanilla notes, along with firm tannins, and plenty of structure and complexity suggest long term aging potential, if you can wait! If you can't, pair this with robust short ribs with a Petite Sirah reduction sauce - Yum!

Bogle 2005 Petite Sirah, California

Fruit from Clarksburg and Lodi blend to create a pleasing palate of mixed berries from start to finish. Ripe, juicy black fruit dominate the core, with a hint of oak and a dollop of spice that add interest on the palate, make this is a friendly, approachable wine. Pair this Petite Sirah with lamb and vegetable kabobs sizzling hot off the grill!

Silkwood 2004 San Joaquin Petite Sirah

The enticing warm berry compote that lifts enticingly from the glass is a mere hint of the goodness to follow! Gobs of rich, jammy boysenberry with a subtle hint of anise coat the mouth gloriously, and the round creamy texture adds to the fullness and purity of fruit. Paired with grilled venison topped with a berry compote would be heavenly!

Robert Biale Vineyards 2004 Thomann Station Napa Valley Petite Sirah

Intense inky black purple hue gives you the first clue this is Petite Sirah. A prolific cornucopia of spices and hint of florality in the nose lead to concentrated blackberry and cassis on the palate with spices weaving throughout. Lush and full, with beautifully structured tannins that will live on for years and years. Pair with a big dish - a Cuban pulled pork with a Petite Sirah mojo sauce would be a delicious match!

Robert Biale Vineyards 2004 Royal Punishers Napa Valley Petite Sirah

Deep, dark inky color with provocative, mysterious aromas. Once it hits your palate, the intense and chewy berry and leather notes prevail! Gorgeous viscosity - richly mouthfilling with copious dark berry flavors and a muscular structure - powerful. This will likely be another incredibly long lived wine! Pair with a slab of savory barbecued ribs - mmm mmm good!

Foppiano Vineyards 2004 Russian River Estate Petite Sirah

Inviting earthy, wild berry aromas promise a potent mouthful and

this wine surely delivers! Rich and full with generous dark berry and peppery spices that tantalize the mid palate. Pleasing spice and earthiness carry throughout, with a nice dash of cocoa on the lingering finish. Persistent firm tannins - absolutely an age-worthy wine. Marry with a Petite Sirah doused mushroom ragout served over a spice-rubbed roast; scrumptious!

Langtry Estates Guenoc 2005 Lake County Petite Sirah

Vanilla and blackberry pie aromas lure you further into the glass, and a brilliant burst of concentrated berries with an anise accent enliven the palate. This wine boasts a rich and smooth texture with a black pepper kick on the finish, and velvety tannins tame the power. I enjoyed this wine with a few savory cheese selections including Maytag blue, extra sharp cheddar, Pecorino and Arina goat cheese; all worked deliciously!

Mettler Family Vineyards 2004 Petite Sirah

This darkly hued Petite Sirah from the Lodi appellation grabs your attention with dense blueberry and wild berry aromas laced with a hint of menthol. Complex, with cedar and herb notes that tiptoe through the robust plummy, ripe berry core. Plenty of power, yet this wine finishes elegantly. Serve with braised lamb shanks prepared with a splash of Petite Sirah of course!

Concannon 2004 Limited Release Central Coast Petite Sirah

Alluring aromatics of bright raspberry and black cherry blend harmoniously with vanilla, mixed spices and herbal tea notes on mid palate. Perfectly balanced with medium bodied tannins and a beautiful focus on purity of fruit. What a bargain at \$14.00. Paired with filet mignon prepared with a cognac, black pepper, raisin sauce - out of this world!

EOS 2004 Petite Sirah, Paso Robles

A pleasant earthiness along with concentrated blueberry and a touch of mint fill the nose. Tannins grab hold upon entry with dense blueberry and blackberry flavors taking center stage on the palate. Earthiness continues to thread throughout suggesting a meaty dish with mushrooms - pair with beef or lamb stroganoff!

EOS 2003 Cupa Grandis Paso Robles Petite Sirah

Whoa baby, talk about full bodied - layers upon layers of flavors! Here's a tightly wound bundle of intense blackberry and black currant flavors with pretty oak nuances and spicy pepper accents that won't quit! This hearty, full bodied rendition benefits nicely from decanting; and will definitely go the distance for years to come. Pair with a rich Steak Diane for a real taste treat!