

Wine Tasting

P. S. I Love You

By Alastair Bland, March 7-13, 2007

In this big messy world of war, heartache and scandalous newspaper headlines, about the last thing that needs the support and promotion of a nonprofit organization is Petite Sirah.

Yet P.S. I Love You in Windsor has been advocating this grape and wine since 2002, hosting promotional events and seminars across America, and that's cool. At a tasting last month at Alameda's Rosenblum Cellars billed as "Dark and Delicious," 29 wineries from around the state teamed up with a restaurant apiece and offered a three-hour evening tasting of Petite Sirah with such dainties as raspberry chocolate truffles, smoked duck, pig pâté, mushrooms, fudge and of course a bounty of cheese. I went heavy on the ports in the first half-hour. The biggest and baddest of the three I located came from Trentadue Winery in Geyserville. After several pours of this tasty whopper you could have blindfolded me, turned me around three times and then convinced me I was back at Fort Mason's Zinfandel Advocates and Producers Festival in late January. Ah, Zinfandel, my true Valentine.

Not that I didn't enjoy the Petite Sirah at Dark and Delicious. Distinguished by its own fine qualities, many of the vintners at Rosenblum Cellars that night praised their wine for being so dark, forward, thick, bold, chewy, voluptuous and all that stuff. I even tasted a memorable vintage from 1985 at the table of Ukiah's Mendocino Wine Company.

Petite Sirah has more than just remarkable redness. It's had a roller coaster of a history, too. Created by a mad pollen-wielding scientist in France in the late 1800s, growers introduced it to California in 1878. The grape survived a vicious phylloxera attack in the 1890s, then Prohibition, and promoters are now calling this grape "America's true, noble variety."

I've also learned that no wine will turn your teeth so blue so fast as Petite Sirah, if that counts for anything. It doesn't really, but still, P.S. I Love You has me convinced that this juice is worth drinking. Even in wartime. www.psiloveyou.org.