



PETITE SIRAH

Petite Sirah, also known as Durif, is a cross of syrah and peloursin. It was first propagated in the Rhône but does not grow well there. Rain during the growing season in France causes the fruit to mold because unlike most varieties the clusters are so tight that air cannot circulate and dry the fruit. That is not a problem in California where rain during the growing season is infrequent.

Petite Sirah is made in a range of styles from medium bodied and elegant to big and bold. But no matter what the style, it is very dark in color and usually long lived with plenty of tannin when young. The bold tannin makes it an especially good pairing with fatty or rich foods such as bar-b-que, short ribs, and ribeye steak.

Notes on a few recently tasted Petites follow, in alphabetical order by winery. (A few wineries use the alternate spelling Petite Syrah but the it is the same grape.)



Bogle

The **2004 Petite Sirah**, California, \$11, has ripe, sweet aromas of Welch's grape jelly and raspberry jam. The jelly continues as flavors sweet and down the middle plus tart raspberry and moderate tannin. The finish is narrow and medium-long.

Concannon

The **2004 Petite Sirah, Limited Release**, Central Coast, \$14, contains 6% grenache and 3% valdiguie. It spent 12 months in French and American oak and has cooked aromas of prune, blackberry, black cherry, and chocolate. Dry, simple, grapy and perfumy with blackberry and plum flavors which finish long and broad.



Foppiano

The **2003 Petite Sirah**, Russian River Valley, \$23, was aged in two-year old American oak. A nice dark, intense nose of plum, blackberry, and a hint of oak repeat as flavors laced with good acidity before you hit a wall of dry tannin. The finish is long and broad. It needs several years to resolve the tannin. If past vintages are any guide, it should age well for ten to twenty years.



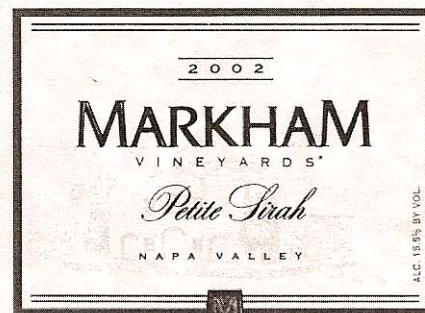
Lava Cap

The **2003 Petite Sirah, Granite Hill, Reserve**, El Dorado County, \$30, opens with unsweetened chocolate, baked blackberry, and a touch of lilac on the nose. Flavors of baked blackberry, unsweetened chocolate, and mocha plus light tannin finish in the middle of the palate with some astringency at the sides. It has lots of alcohol which makes it finish hot but gives it a smooth mouthfeel. It will be popular.



Lolonis

The **2003 Petite Sirah, Sisters Blend**, Redwood Valley, \$32, 300 cases, has a very, very ripe nose of chocolate, vanilla, baked blackberry, and chocolate covered graham cracker before bright, juicy mouthfilling but not sweet flavors of the same plus fine tannin. It finishes long and broad. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. The **2002 Petite Sirah, Orpheus, Heritage Vineyards**, Redwood Valley, \$32, opens very ripe with dark chocolate with orange undertones, blackberry, plum, and wildflower honey. The fruit is first on the palate followed by the chocolate and honey and laced with loads of tannin. Everything carries through the medium-broad, medium-long finish. Overall, the wine is almost soft in texture but needs a couple of years to lessen the impact of the tannin or drink it now with 'ribs or other fatty foods. Very Tasty.



Markham

The **2002 Petite Sirah**, Napa Valley, \$29, was aged for 21.5 months in 5% French oak, 15% new, and 45% American oak barrels. It opens with appealing blueberry, wet earth, and smoky oak on the nose. Flavors of blueberry, cherry, and smoky oak are laced with gripy tannin and finish long and medium-broad with persistent alcohol at the back. It would rate Very Tasty except for the obvious alcohol.



Marr

The **2004 Petite Sirah**, [Tehama Foothills], California, \$27, spent sixteen months in French and American oak, 30% new, and has very ripe and rich aromas of blackberry, black cherry, plum, and dough before bright flavors of the same plus raspberry and firm tannin. The long, medium-broad finish adds light pepper. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty. In contrast, the **2004 Petite Sirah, Shannon Ranch**, Lake County, \$29, opens with smoky oak and bacon fat introducing sweet, round, soft, bright flavors of cherry and raspberry with pepper at the sides and some dry tannin. It finishes broad and medium-long. Well put together, it should be quite popular.

Oak Grove

The **2004 Petite Sirah, Reserve**, California, \$8, has aromas of violets, lactic, inner tube, and black tea. Slightly tart flavors of raspberry and Montmorency cherry are laced with light, firm tannin and finish medium-long and somewhat narrow. Simple and bargain priced for everyday drinking.

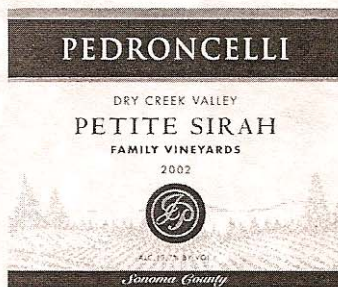
Stags' Leap Winery

The **2004 Petite Syrah**, Napa Valley, \$38, is a blend of 85% petite sirah, 10% syrah, 1.5% grenache, 1.5% viognier, and 1% each of carignane and mourvèdre. It has very ripe, inviting aromas of blackberry, black raspberry, cherry, walnut, cinnamon, and sweet smoke. Front loaded flavors of the same are broad but not sweet and are leanly structured. The finishes adds pepper, rolls to the back and disappears. Well balanced, structured, and integrated.



Parducci

The **2002 Petite Sirah, Signature Label, Old Vines**, Mendocino County, \$35, 139 cases, contains 5% syrah and was aged in oak, 68% French and 32% American. It has a bright, ripe, inviting bouquet of raspberry, plum, and cherry which continues as ripe, bright, juicy, slightly tart flavors laced with moderate tannin. Everything carries through the long, medium-broad finish. A well balanced, structured, and integrated Petite. Tasty with food.

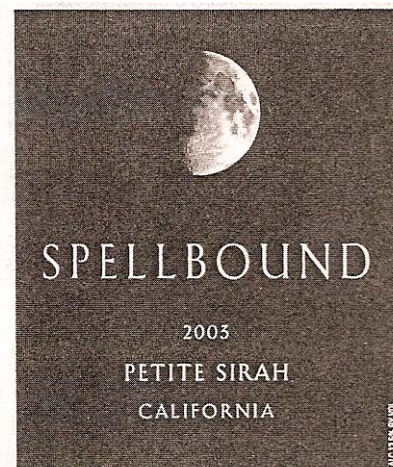


Pedroncelli

The **2002 Petite Sirah, Family Vineyards**, Dry Creek Valley, \$14, contains 7% zinfandel and spent 16 months in American oak. It opens big and ripe with tanned leather, smoke, fat, and blackberry introducing juicy, mouthfilling flavors of everything from the nose plus a hint of raspberry and some dry tannin. A bit of alcohol shows at the end.

Victor Hugo

The **2004 Petite Sirah**, Paso Robles, \$18, was aged in American oak for sixteen months and has very sweet aromas of raspberry liqueur, blackberry, and black cherry which continue as light bodied and not particularly sweet flavors laced with firm tannin. It finishes all at the back of the palate.



Spellbound

Sixty percent of the **2003 Petite Sirah**, California, \$15, was aged in French oak, the balance in stainless steel. It has bright, juicy, light cherry dominated flavors plus light tannin.



Vina Robles

The **2004 Petite Sirah, Jardine Vineyard**, Paso Robles, \$26, was aged for 14 months in French oak, 30% new, and has an appealing nose of sweet smoke, very ripe blackberry, purple plum, coffee grounds, and lavender before bright, juicy flavors of cherry, raspberry, plum, and coffee grounds laced with moderate tannin. The long, broad finish adds pepper. A nice Petite to pair with food. Well balanced, structured, and integrated. Tasty.

