

PETITE SIRAH

Reviewed by Rebecca Chapa, except where noted.

All wines are 100% Petite Sirah, except where noted.

value

Bogle Vineyards 2005 / California

Spice, pepper, and clove on the nose with hints of grapy fruit beneath. Very concentrated explosion of fruit on the palate, showing raspberry with tangy, supple tannins. Bison or venison with berry accents. ■

Bogle Vineyards, 916-744-1139, \$100/case



EOS Estate Winery 2004 Paso Robles, California

96.8% Petite Sirah, 1.9% Cabernet Sauvignon, 0.7% Zinfandel, 0.4% Merlot, 0.2% Cabernet Franc

Cinnamon and coffee notes on the nose with more fruit on the palate. Ripe strawberry notes; bright and clean with well-knit tannins. Bratwurst or chicken sausages. ■

EOS Estate Winery, 805-239-2562, \$98/case

moderate



Concannon Vineyard 2004 Limited Release / Central Coast, California

91% Petite Sirah, 6% Grenache, 3% Valdiguié

Pretty, perfumed nose of raspberry and rose hips. Very balanced, integrated tannins and alcohol with flavors of rose petals, berries, summer gardens, and bramble fruit. Squab or quail. ■

Concannon Vineyard, 800-258-9866, \$112/case



EOS Estate Winery 2004 Estate Bottled, Reserve / Paso Robles, California

96% Petite Sirah, 2.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 0.5% Cabernet Franc, 0.5% Merlot, 0.5% Zinfandel, Oak and spice on the nose with touches of tobacco and cedar. Chewy, dense tannins and firm structure with smoky, meaty, rich, and robust flavors with some black cherry, black currant, and cassis. Philly cheesesteak. ■ EOS Estate Winery, 805-239-2562, \$72/6 bottles

Foppiano Vineyards 2004 Estate Bottled / Russian River Valley, California

Subtle nose of fresh cherry; tart, bright, and lively on the palate with pure cherry fruit; simple but drinkable. Grilled vegetables: eggplants, portobellos, red peppers. ■ Foppiano Vineyards, 707-433-7272, \$130/case

Pedroncelli Family Vineyards 2003 / Dry Creek Valley, California

93% Petite Sirah, 7% Zinfandel Smoky, toasty nose with hints of spice and red cherry; very chewy tannins with flavors of coffee, leather, and red plum accented by vanilla. Beef short ribs. ■ Pedroncelli Winery, 800-836-3894, \$116/case



Petite Petit 2005 / Lodi, California 85% Petite Sirah, 15% Petit Verdot

Smoky vanilla and toast aromas atop ripe black plum and black currant, plus deep flavors of jammy fruit compote with notes of vanilla. Smoked turkey. ■ Michael-David Winery, 209-368-7384, \$126/case

premium

David Bruce 2004 Shell Creek Vineyard / Paso Robles, California

Aromas of oak and molasses; very big and chewy with mouth-filling flavors of jam, toasty oak, and mixed-berry compote. Grilled marinated pork loin. ■ David Bruce Winery, 408-354-4214, \$180/case

Earthquake 2004 Earthquake / Lodi, California

92% Petite Sirah, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon Campfire smokiness on the nose with notes of burnt marshmallow and soy. Somewhat candied sweet cherry pie flavors plus vanilla. Blue cheese or hunks of bitter chocolate. ■ Michael-David Winery, 209-368-7384, \$166/case

Parducci Wine Cellars 2004 True Grit / Mendocino, California

98% Petite Sirah, 2% Viognier Almost meaty aromas with notes of spice and cassis; Rhône-like with rich flavors of

cedar, clove, and anise, supported by dense fruit flavors of blackberry; very complex with a long finish. Prime rib roast or rack of lamb. ★ ■

Parducci Wine Cellars, 707-463-5350, \$168/case

Victor Hugo 2004 / Paso Robles, California

Youthful berry aromatics bolstered by smoky oak. Very sweet, concentrated, jamlike berry fruit with hints of citrus zest, clove, cardamom, and cinnamon; sweet fruit balanced with very big but rounded tannins. Big roast. ■ Victor Hugo Winery, 805-434-1128, \$160/case

prestige

Ballentine Vineyards 2004 Field Blend / St. Helena, California

Petite Sirah, Zinfandel, Carignan, Syrah Aromas of toasty sandalwood with hints of red cherry. Some sweet cherry flavors with hints of mocha and tobacco and chewy tannins. Roasted chicken. ■ Ballentine Vineyards, 707-963-3493, \$252/case

Concannon Vineyard 2003 Reserve / Livermore Valley, California

98.5% Petite Sirah, 1.1% Cabernet Sauvignon, 0.4% Merlot Aromas of jam, berry, oak spice, and cedar. Firm tannins with significant oak influence and concentrated black plum flavors but well-integrated alcohol. Hearty comfort foods like meat loaf or pot roast. ■ Concannon Vineyard, 800-258-9866, \$240/case

David Bruce
2004 Estate Bottled / Santa Cruz Mountains, California
51% Petite Sirah, 49% Syrah
Intense black currant and

berries on the nose; very rich and dense on the palate with firm but balanced tannins, bright acidity, flavors of pomegranate and black cherry, and a long finish. Rib-eye steak. ★ 

David Bruce Winery,
408-354-4214, \$330/case

Esoterica by Kent Rasmussen
2004 Chavez-Leeds Vineyard /
Rutherford, California

Youthful nose of pure berry and a hint of minerality. Very bright but packed with intense flavors of pure, concentrated raspberry and blueberry; well knit with supple, polished tannins. Aged porterhouse or filet mignon. ★ 

Ron Berger Wines,
415-499-8328, \$260/case

Girard

2005 / Napa Valley, California
93% *Petite Sirah*, 7% other
varietals

Aromas of chocolate and mocha; palate of brambly boysenberry with elegant tannins and a rich mouth-feel; very harmonious. Leg of lamb. 

Wilson Daniels, Ltd.,
707-963-9661, \$234/case

Markham Vineyards

2003 / Napa Valley, California
Vanilla and oak aromas, with hints of red currant; big tannins plus candied cherry flavors and hints of pomegranate and slight Port characteristics. Oxtails braised in red wine. 

Terlato Wines International,
707-257-2641, \$225/case

Mettler Family Vineyards
2004 / Lodi, California

91% *Petite Sirah*, 9% *Cabernet Sauvignon*
Very aromatic with lilac and wild strawberries. Strawberry jam on the palate with some oak spice, hints of clove, and five-spice powder. Wild mushroom tart. 

Wimbledon Wine Company,
888-977-7737, \$204/case

Miro Cellars

2005 Sommers Vineyard / Dry
Creek Valley, California

Brambly blackberry aromas with hints of allspice. Juicy, fruit-forward flavors of cherry and cassis with well-integrated tannin and a hint of oak. Very drinkable. Pork spare ribs. 

Miro Cellars, 707-894-7915,
\$240/case

Silkwood Wines

2004 / San Joaquin County,
California

Earthy aromas with notes of mushroom, cassis, and black cherry. Rich and ripe on the palate with flavors of cassis, black cherry, and raspberry, plus a hint of blueberry; simple finish. Pan-seared red meats. 

Santé. *Silkwood Wines*,
800-550-WINE, \$165/6 bottles



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are members of
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PETS: A Blue Tooth Triumph

Although *Petite Sirah* has been grown in California since 1878, it has not gained the cult following of Zinfandel. But change is afoot. Yes, acreage has fallen from a peak of 14,000 acres, but in 2003, 5,166 acres were in the ground, 425 of which were new vines—far more than the 1990 low of 1,400 acres. Perhaps it was the research conducted by Dr. Carole Meredith at UC Davis that created a burst of interest in this unique variety. In 1996 she determined that *Petite Sirah* is the offspring of *Peloursin* and *Syrah*, identical to a crossing made by Dr. Durif in the south of France; as a result of Meredith's work, Durif remains a synonym for *Petite Sirah*.

The storied parentage is not all that *Petite Sirah* has going for it. With deep color, firm tannins, full body, and often potent alcohol, a *Petite Sirah* wine can pack a punch. Although styles abound, it almost always exhibits great expression and concentration. Proponents of the variety (i.e., the trade organization P.S. I Love You) are extolling its virtues. Individual vintners such as Foppiano are working hard to recapture the heritage and pedigree of the variety by holding the Noble *Petite Sirah* Symposium. These efforts have not gone unnoticed; fans of the grape have bequeathed a cooler alias than Durif: PETS. *Petite Sirah* should continue to produce wines of great expression as it earns a greater appreciation from vintners and connoisseurs.

—Rebecca Chapa

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