

Everybody's "Pet" Project ~ What's Going On?

By Jo Diaz

This morning, I did what I do every day... Search for another new Petite Sirah producer. I keep the grower and producer numbers for Louis Foppiano, so that when we write each Petite Report (something Foppiano Vineyards has been producing for years), we have accurate statistics.

You'd think with only a little over 6,000 acres of Petite Sirah planted in California - compared to say, Chardonnay's nearly 100,000 acres - there would only be a handful of producers.

In 2002, when I inherited the job of editor for this report, there were only 60 growers and producers - combined. Now, numbers are huge by comparison. His full report will be coming out in about a month; meanwhile, this morning I clocked in the 492nd producer.

The number of growers is also huge, and will all be listed in Foppiano's Petite Report.

A couple of years ago, when I read Jim Laube's

story declaring that Syrah was going to be the next hottest variety, I took issue with that statement in a letter to the editor, citing that Syrah - the variety - didn't have its own passionate advocacy group. Yes, the Rhone Rangers existed (and still does), but that group promotes all cultivars from the Rhone, not any specific one. [If you don't know what's happened to Syrah in the ensuing years, ask any grower.]

When PS I Love You started, only ZAP existed as another cultivar advocacy group.

Also, being one of the founders and the executive director of this Petite advocacy group, I knew the back end of what was quietly happening with Petite.

Today, as I added the 492nd producer, I'm reminded of one of my husband's favorite quotes that he picked up from American composer and saxophonist Wayne Shorter, "It's not he who comes on strongest; it's he who last longest."

