



# The Wine Corner

## Petite Sirah perseveres



Miro Petite Sirah is a big brawny wine with a long life ahead of it

By Pierre DuMont

Petite Sirah is the Rodney Dangerfield of grapes. It's been around forever, but it never gets any respect. Cabernet has long been king, Merlot had its hour in the sun, and now Pinot Noir is the hot grape.

Through it all, Petite Sirah has been trudged along below the radar. But that may be changing.

First, a little background. In 1880 Dr. Francois Durif, a grape nurseryman in the south of France, developed a new grape varietal by crossing the noble Syrah grape with Peloursin, a minor French grape. He named his new creation (unimaginatively) Durif. During the next decade Durif was introduced into California where it came to be called Petite Sirah. It quickly became a popular grape for blending, and during prohibition it was shipped from California to home winemakers in the eastern United States. Concannon Vineyard in Livermore was the first to release Petite Sirah as a varietal in 1961. California Petite Sirah acreage dropped to a low of 2,400 acres in 1995 as growers tore out the vines to plant more Cabernet and Merlot.

Then an amazing renaissance began. People began to notice that you could buy an outstanding, delicious Petite Sirah for one-third the price of an equivalent Cabernet Sauvignon. Along with the value benefit, an ABC (Anything But Cabernet) backlash began and people started to search for interesting alternatives.

Petite Sirah acreage has tripled since 1995, and there are now over

200 producers who are making it.

While the grape can be vintified into a variety of styles, it is characterized by inky, black color, a brooding, blackberry, earthy nose, huge body on the palate and full, firm tannins on the finish. It is the perfect wine to go with BBQ, roasted meats or game. Many Petite Sirahs can age 20 years or more.

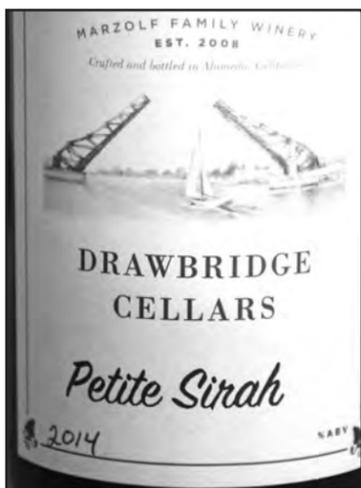
The following wines represent the best Petite Sirahs now on the market. They are wines that deserve to be searched out.

• **2014 Drawbridge Cellars Petite Sirah**

Piedmont native Wayne Marzolf and his brother Roland have crafted a stunning Petite at their small winery in Alameda. It is a deep, vivid purple with flavors of blueberry and boysenberry jam, violets and a long finish. It is drinkable now but has the tannins to last for a decade in the cellar. It is a stunning effort from this new micro-winery. For information, call 510-719-4010.

• **2014 Miro Petite Sirah Coyote Ridge Vineyard**

Crafted by talented winemaker Miro Tcholakov who also makes the wines at Trentadue, this blockbuster from the Dry Creek Valley has tons of dark brooding blackberry fruit with just the right amount of vanilla oak. It is luscious and layered in the mouth and has a long smooth finish. Beautiful. [www.mirocellars.com](http://www.mirocellars.com)



Drawbridge Cellars is lovingly crafted in the East Bay.

• **2012 Rock Wall "Le Mur de Roche" Petite Sirah**

This Alameda-based winery has a sure hand with Zinfandel and Petite Sirah and this is one of the finest P.S.'s I have had. They have lavished the wine with new French oak barrels for four years, which has created a complex, layered, very structured wine that is built to last decades in the cellar. Very impressive. [www.rockwallwines.com](http://www.rockwallwines.com)

• **2014 Barra Petite Sirah (GREAT VALUE)**

This small family owned winery in the Redwood Valley area of Mendocino County has put a modest price tag of \$22 on this wine. It represents an outstanding value. The nose is a combination of sweet spices, blackberry, and earth. The body is a bit lighter than most Petites, but with delicious balance and good acidity. The delicious wine would go great with grilled foods or pastas. [www.barraofmendocino.com](http://www.barraofmendocino.com)

• **2011 Deiner-Handal Petite**

**"Petite Sirah is the Rodney Dangerfield of grapes; It's been around forever, but it never gets any respect."**

**Sirah**

This hails from Alexander Valley in Sonoma County. It is an intriguing blend of vanilla and fresh berry scents. The body is big, but luscious, and is bursting with fruit. A long, lingering finish with reasonable tannins. A great effort. [www.deiner-handalwines.com](http://www.deiner-handalwines.com)

• **2014 Klinker Brick Petite Sirah**

This dark, brooding monster from Lodi is not for the faint of heart. It smells like you just buried your face in a warm blackberry pie. It is huge in the mouth with a touch of residual sugar and a long finish. It would be great with barbecued ribs fresh off the grill. [www.klinkerbrick.com](http://www.klinkerbrick.com)

• **2014 Theopolis Rose of Petite Sirah**

A rare wine indeed. You can make rose from any red grape, but I have rarely seen Petite Sirah used. The color is about the darkest rose you will see, and the nose is fresh and clean with good purity of fruit on the palate. I like rose not just in summertime. This one would go well on a winter night with a nice roast chicken. [www.theopolisvineyards.com](http://www.theopolisvineyards.com)

• **2014 Pedroncelli Petite Sirah**

The Pedroncelli family has been producing great value wines for several generations from their property in Sonoma County. The nose is a combination of sweet spices, blackberry, and earth. The body is a bit lighter than most Petites, but with delicious balance and good acidity. The quaffable wine would go great with pastas or cheese. [www.pedroncelli.com](http://www.pedroncelli.com)

• **2013 Vina Robles Petite Sirah**

Vina Robles is one of the shining lights of the Paso Robles region producing a wide array of outstanding wines. Their Petite Sirah is one of my favorites. An opaque purple-colored wine with a forceful peppery, chocolately, cassis-scented nose, and thick, dense full-bodied flavors, oozing with extract and glycerin. With a

# Planning Your Finances

## Overcoming roadblocks to a comfortable retirement

By T.J. Stevko

In your life, you will want to take many journeys. Some are physical – perhaps you'll finally visit the French Riviera or the Caribbean. Others involve personal growth – one day, you'll finally become fluent in that foreign language you've been studying. But of all the destinations you can identify, few will be as important as retirement – specifically, a comfortable retirement. And that's why it's so important to consider the "roadblocks" you might encounter on your road to the retirement lifestyle you've envisioned.

Here are five of the most common obstacles:

**1. Insufficient investments**

Very few of us have ever reported investing "too much" for their retirement. But a great many people regret that they saved and invested too little. Don't make that mistake. Contribute as much as you can afford to your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan, and increase your contributions whenever your salary goes up. Even if you do participate in your retirement plan at work, you may also still be eligible to fund an IRA, so take advantage of that opportunity, too. And always look for other ways to cut expenses and direct this "found" money toward your retirement.

**2. Underestimating your longevity**

You can't predict how long you'll live, but you can make some reasonable guesses – and you might be surprised at your prospects. According to the Social Security Administration, men reaching age 65 today can expect to live, on average, until age 84, while women turning age 65 today can anticipate living, on average, until age 86.6. That's a lot of years – and you'll need to plan for them when you create long-term saving, investing and spending strategies.

**3. Not establishing a suitable withdrawal rate**

Once you are retired, you will likely need to start withdrawing money from your 401(k), IRA and other retirement accounts. It's essential that you don't withdraw too much each year – obviously, you don't want to run the risk of outliving your resources. That's why you need to establish an annual withdrawal rate that's appropriate for your situation, incorporating variables such as your age, the value of your retirement accounts, your estimated lifestyle expenses, and so on. Calculating such a withdrawal rate can be challenging, so you may want to consult with a professional financial advisor.

**4. Taking Social Security at the wrong time**

You can start taking Social Security as early as age 62, but your checks will be bigger if you wait until your full retirement age, which will probably be 66 or 67, or when your payments "max out" at 70. You might not be able to afford to wait until then, but by postponing the date you begin taking withdrawals, you could help yourself considerably.

**5. Ignoring inflation**

It's been low in recent years, but inflation hasn't disappeared, and it could rise at exactly the wrong time – when you're retired. That's why you'll want your portfolio to include some investments with the potential to outpace inflation, even during your retirement years.

By being aware of these roadblocks, and taking steps to overcome them, you can help smooth your journey toward retirement. Once you get there, you may enjoy it more.

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It's time to get comfortable.

# For Troop 11 Scouts, it's snow time



Troop 11 Boy Scouts Dash Patterson (left), Ryan Parkhurst, Nathan Burge, Ryan Roos, Sam Reynolds, Tommy McNeil, Billy McNeil and Jake Alering on a ski trip to Hoyfjellet Lodge at Soda Springs.



Troop 11 Boy Scouts and chaperones on a recent ski trip: (front) Will Sprague (left), Quintan Han, Domenic Ripley, Alex Gotto, Billy McNeil, Holden Walz, Jason Machle; (2nd row) Jack Stein, Daniel McLaughlin, Will Devine, Ryan Roos, Ethan Alering, Tommy McNeil, Evan Eldridge, Jack Kobal, Sam Reynolds, Katy Kobal, Max Cole, Seamus Chamberlain; (top) Clay Brookfield, Chris Eldridge, Ryan Parkhurst, Jake Alering, Tim McNeil. Will Davies, Dash Patterson, Jeff Parkhurst, Jake Alering, Brady Cole, Todd Reynolds, Troy Alering and Anne Hauss.

Piedmont Boy Scouts from Troop 11 headed to the mountains the weekend of January 27-29 for their annual ski trip. They stayed at the Hoyfjellet Lodge in Soda Springs on Friday and Saturday nights, working on their Snow Sports Merit Badge by day while skiing at Sugar Bowl in the beautiful, fresh powder.



Troop 11 Boy Scouts Ethan Alering (left), Billy McNeil, Alex Gotto, Ryan Parkhurst, Nathan Burge, and Jake Alering, play Charades at the Hoyfjellet Lodge in Soda Springs.

READ IT IN THE POST

## Wine

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sweet, long, lavishly rich finish, this wine should drink beautifully for 10-15 years. [www.vinarobles.com](http://www.vinarobles.com)

• **2014 Michael David Petite Petit (GREAT VALUE)**

This is a blend of Petite Sirah and Petite Verdot, hence the name. It is far from a small wine. It is bursting with boysenberry and cassis flavors that create a joyous explosion in the mouth. The tannins are soft and approachable and the finish is rich and fulfilling. On top of it all, the \$18 retail price makes this a great deal. [www.michaeldavidwinery.com](http://www.michaeldavidwinery.com)

• **2008 Silkwood Petite Sirah "My Way"**

I ran into this wine many years ago and I am glad to see that they are still producing fabulous wines from the unheralded Modesto area of the Central Valley. John Monnich has crafted the biggest Petite of the tasting. The nose is reticent at first, but hints at black pepper and currants. The body is massive with monstrous size portions of berry fruit, oak, and tannins. This wine should be put away for five years and will last at least 20 years. [www.silkwoodwines.com](http://www.silkwoodwines.com)

• **2012 Tres Sabores Petite Sirah**

This comes from a Calistoga-based winery that I have never tried before. The color is an opaque black/purple, and the nose offers up licorice, pepper, and cassis aromas. It is thick, juicy, and full-bodied on the palate, with a lush, opulent finish. This is serious juice. [www.tressabores.com](http://www.tressabores.com)

• **2014 Bogle Petite Sirah (GREAT VALUE)**

This wine has been one of the wine world's best values for years.

In addition, it is readily available at most Safeway stores. For \$10 it's hard to find a better bottle of wine. It is a bit lighter in body than most Petite Sirahs but is packed with jammy fruit of plums and blueberries and has a clean refreshing finish. It's a perfect wine for a picnic or BBQ.

[www.boglewinery.com](http://www.boglewinery.com)

• **2014 Ballentine Petite Sirah Pocaí Vineyard**

This small family-run Calistoga winery has been a very consistent producer of very fine Petite Sirahs, and this wine continues the tradition. Dark brick color, huge sweet vanilla/oak nose, perfect structure and balance between acid and fruit. Firm tannins and a long finish. It needs 10 more years to achieve maturity, but is a *tour du force*. [www.ballentinevineyards.com](http://www.ballentinevineyards.com)

• **Justice Grace 10 Shoeshine Petite Sirah NV**

This wine is dedicated to those who work for justice and grace in the workplace and toward a living wage for all. A good cause to support. This Berkeley-based producer has blended in Mourvedre and Merlot to give added complexity to the wine. Inky black color, voluptuous vanilla nose, boatloads of fruit on the mid-palate with just the right amount of tannin on the finish. This is a great wine in support of a great cause. [www.justicegrace.com](http://www.justicegrace.com)

\* **2014 Kokomo Petite Sirah**

Healdsburg based Kokomo sourced these grapes from two vineyards in Dry Creek Valley and then aged the wine in 30% new oak. Dark purple color, straightforward blackberry nose with just a touch of oak, full luscious fruit on the palate with a soft finish. A fruit bomb! Great with grilled steaks or pork chops. [www.kokomowinery.com](http://www.kokomowinery.com)