



TASTING NOTES



2004 Columbia Valley Wild Alfalfa Syrah

100 percent Syrah

13 percent Ciel du Cheval (Clone 174 Syrah) (Red Mountain) • 31 percent Ranch at the End of the Road (Red Mountain) • 56% Rustic Ridge Vineyard (Rows 25-36) (Rattlesnake Hills)

Harvest and Fermentation

All grapes were hand picked when flavors were judged optimal for the variety and the vineyard. Hand sorting of the grape clusters to remove both imperfect grape clusters and material other than grapes and a gentle destemming is sine qua non. Fermentation was conducted "whole berry". Each lot was punched down two times daily, and temperature of fermentation varied from 82°F to 88°F. Pressing of the grapes was determined strictly by tasting the fermenting wine. The malo-lactic fermentation was completed in barrel.

Élevage

Each lot is individually assessed for the proper cooperage. We use only French oak from the Allier, Vosges, and Center of France forests. Our preferred Syrah cooperages are Sirgue, Sylvain, and Billion. All barrels are medium toast with untoasted barrel heads. Each of the 17 barrels of Wild Alfalfa was fined with two egg whites to soften tannins. The Syrah was aged for 16 months in barrels (20% new) prior to bottling.

Winemakers' Notes

2004 was a challenging vintage beginning with a damaging winter, a scorching hot summer, two weeks of intermittent rain after Labor Day, then a fast and furious harvest. One could not pick grapes by numbers or be a "push button winemaker". 2004 will separate the wheat from the chaff in the Washington wine industry.

Ranch Vineyard Syrah lends blueberries and vibrancy to the blend. The 174 Syrah clone from Ciel du Cheval has wonderful lilacs and raspberry notes. Rustic Ridge Syrah adds white pepper and pomegranate flavors. The Wild Alfalfa Syrah is a vibrant, floral Syrah with taut richness that will uncoil over the next eight years.

14.5% alcohol • 392 cases bottled

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