

MARCH 2009 WINES

▶ All wines we taste and review are current releases and can be found and purchased locally, at the winery or on the web ◀

PETITE SIRAH – DARK AND DELICIOUS – PART 2

PETITE SIRAH WAS FIRST PLANTED IN CALIFORNIA IN 1884 AND TODAY THERE ARE MORE THAN 60 PRODUCERS. THE TRADE ORGANIZATION CHOSE A NAME THAT SUMS UP WHAT A LOT OF WINEMAKERS AND WINE DRINKERS THINK OF THIS GRAPE – “P.S. I LOVE YOU”. IT'S BEEN CALLED “THE MOST UNDERRATED VARIETY FOR PLEASURE AND LONGEVITY”.

GOT FOOD?

Oh yes! Just what you would expect from a beautifully dense, dark purple-red wine with flavors to match the depth of color. Lamb, grilled meats, prime rib, hearty stews, pasta with big flavorful sauces, meatloaf, Ahi tuna, game birds (duck, goose, quail), turkey, venison, pork, spicy barbecue sauces and strong cheeses. How's that for starters? Versatile!

THE WINES! – the second half of a wonderful tasting of Petite Sirahs

WE HAD SO MANY WONDERFUL WINES TO TASTE FOR FEBRUARY – TWICE AS MANY AS USUAL. SO HERE ARE THE SECOND FIVE FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH.

YOU'LL FIND MORE **MADRIGAL** AND **EOS**, PLUS **GIRARD**, **AUGUST BRIGGS** AND **LA STORIA** IN LAST MONTH – FEBRUARY'S REVIEW!

LISTED IN THE ORDER TASTED – TASTING REVIEWS FOLLOW

Wine G	☐	2005	MADRIGAL	Napa Valley	Napa Valley	\$35
Wine H	☐	2006	CHRISTOPHER CREEK	Reserve	Russian River Valley	\$32
Wine I	☐	2006	EOS	Reserve	Paso Robles	\$25
Wine J	☐	2003	FOPPIANO	Estate Reserve	Russian River Valley	\$45
Wine K	☐	2006	MIRO		Dry Creek Valley	\$30

➤ When possible, prices listed are winery suggested retail ◀

“Breaking the code” ♦ Terms used in the reviews that follow

- Balance** ➤ Refers to Fruit, Acid and Tannin. When they are all perceivable in equal amounts and one doesn't appear to be excessive or lacking, the wine is in “balance”.
- Hot** ➤ Refers to percentage of alcohol. If the alcohol is noticeable, it's not in “balance” and makes the wine unpleasant or “hot”.

Every wine will have the following self-explanatory terms to describe the **FRUIT**, **ACID** and **TANNIN**

Ideal (or “just right”)

'Slightly' excessive or 'Slightly' lacking,

Excessive or Lacking (more than 'slightly')

'Very' excessive or 'Very' lacking (definitely too much or too little)

ENJOY THE REVIEWS – ENJOY THE JOURNEY!



WINE "G"

2005 MADRIGAL
Napa Valley

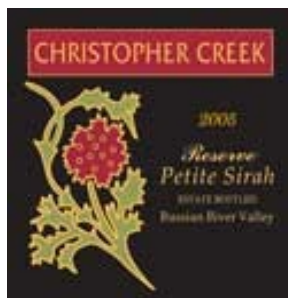
\$35
14.4 % alcohol

This is the second Madrigal Petite Sirah we tasted this month. The winery's history began with this wine in the 1930's. Originally owned by local farmer Jules Alcouffe, the property was purchased by Duckhorn Vineyards in 1987. Hired to develop and manage the land for Duckhorn, the Madrigals bought the first 10 acres of the 30-acre parcel in 1994 and completed the purchase of the property in 2004. Since the late 1930s, three generations of the Madrigal family have farmed the vineyards of Napa Valley. In 1995, the Madrigals started making their own wine.

100% Petite Sirah Barrel aged 15 months in both French and American oak

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Dark fruit, earthy aromas. Spice, pepper and licorice on the finish. Food: rack of lamb and mushrooms.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
I liked this wine. Dark cherry aroma, dark cherry and plum flavors. Fruit forward – but elegant – with enough structure to age.
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Great nose – fruit and lots of cedar. Nice balance, but the subtle flavors are subdued by the alcohol.
- Mary** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Dark fruit and oaky aromas. I like this wine – more my style: less fruit, more balanced but just a little hot. Nicely balanced. I could drink this by itself or enjoy it with Osso Bucco, meatloaf or chicken.
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Medium body, Med- long finish
Earthy, chocolate cherry aromas. A little dustiness, like cocoa, then dark fruits.
- Mark** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
Black currant aroma. A dark, earthy, fruity wine with black currant and a hint of tobacco. Has 3 – 6 years aging potential to soften tannins. For now, pair with beef or lamb.
- Ingrid** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Full body, Medium finish
Very nice wine – full bodied. A nice picnic wine, or serve with cheese or quiche Lorraine.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med- long finish
Very nice wine. Fruity at first, then sweet fruit continues in the lingering finish. Good party wine – with cheese or pizza.
- Linda** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Med-full body, Long finish
A tannic wine with berry aromas and very ripe (too ripe?) fruit flavors.
- Bill** *Did not review this wine.*
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Complex nose – dark fruits, forest floor, blackberry, plum, coffee. A rich and balanced wine. Lovely, more elegant style. Could see this with lots of different foods – winter fare. Nice fruit and spice in finish.



WINE "H"

2006 CHRISTOPHER CREEK **Reserve** \$32
Russian River Valley 14.9 % alcohol

Christopher Creek Winery is a small, family owned winery located in Dry Creek Valley, in the middle of a Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard. with a history of producing estate bottled wines. Annual production is 4000 cases. The winery is owned by the Wasserman Family who, in addition to growing grapes, has been farming oranges and olives in the Central Valley of California for the past 35 years . This wine is estate grown from several blocks of Petite Sirah each with varying age, elevation and sun exposure.

100% Petite Sirah Aged 14 months in French and American oak barrels 630 cases produced

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Med-full body, Medum finish
I got a more medicinal character to this wine – and high alcohol. The fruit came through in the finish.
- Cory** **Fruit and Tannin:** Excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Black pepper aromas – and alcohol. Big fruit, big tannins, very high alcohol. The fruit is overwhelmed by the alcohol and tannins.
- James H** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-short finish
Great nose – wood and earth. Acidity is a bit awkward and forward – possibly added to balance alcohol?
- Mary** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Excessive **Tannin:** Ideal / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Oak, dark fruit and asparagus aromas. This wine has less fruit, more oak and herbacious qualities – and it's quite hot which gives it a bitter character. I'd try it with a mushroom risotto.
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Medium body, Med- long finish
Gorgeous color – smoky, sweet cherry aromas – a young wine with noticeable alcohol. Age 4 – 5 years.
- Mark** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Full body, Med -long finish
Pepper and almost syrupy-sweet cherry aroma. A big, bold, high tannin wine that's a little too hot for my taste. Has a silky finish – would age 2 – 4 years. Try with barbecue ribs a mild sauce.
- Ingrid** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All excessive / Full body, Long finish
Peppery, dark, dense and high alcohol wine. Pair it with game or chocolate mousse.
- Jim A** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
Great color – very dark and dense. The wine itself is a bit hot. Keep it away from hot, spicy foods – good with mashed potatoes.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Long finish
Ripe, dark fruit aromas. A very fruity wine with rich color. Very smooth, but also a little hot.
- Bill** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Did not comment on this wine.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Medium body, Long finish
Very nice, complex nose – dark red cherry and black fruit, earthy, minty. Lovely dense color. First impression is one of heat, then it gives way to great fruit. With less alcohol this would be a delicious wine. Silky body, and once you're past the alcohol, the finish becomes long and fruity.



WINE "I"

2006 EOS Estate
Paso Robles

Private Reserve

\$25
13.5 % alcohol

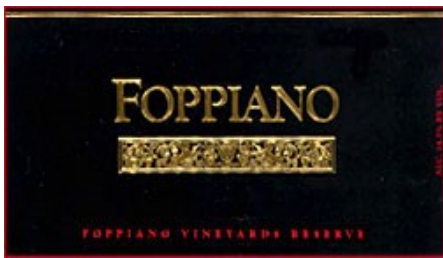
This is the third wine produced by the 100% Solar Energy powered winery, EOS, that the tasting panel reviewed last month. The other two wines, which you can access in the February archives were the *Estate Petite Sirah* and the new "*Lost Angel*" series that EOS has introduced as a fruity, easy-drinking wine at a very attractive price point. The grapes for this Private Reserve series comes from two vineyards and the 2006 vintage was a particularly good growing season.

100% Petite Sirah

17.5 months in both new and 2-year-old French and American Oak

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Cherry, spice, licorice and pepper aromas. Fruit flavors, some blackberry in finish. Good with pork loin and other milder meats.
- Cory** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
A nice nose of plum and strawberry. Chocolate comes through on the palate. I think this is a very nice example of the varietal. Pair with hearty winter soups and stews.
- James H** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
Woody, red fruit aromas. A lighter style of petite sirah -- not particularly complex, but quite a pleasant wine..
- Mary** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-ong finish
Caramel and berries hit me right away – followed by a little heat. Nice, fresh, young wine with dried berry fruit that should go well with food.
- Rob** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Very ripe fruit, with oak and a slight medicinal quality. Not much aging potential – needs gamy meat.
- Mark** **Fruit and Tannin:** Excessive **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Full body, Med -long finish
A bold, full-bodied wine with sweet fruit aromas and beautiful, deep color. An earthy base with big tannins and some alcohol. Needs bold, flavorful food.
- Ingrid** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Medium body, Med-short finish
Very nice, well-balanced, easy to drink petite sirah. Would go with anything. Love this one!
- Jim A** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
An intense, peppery, hot petite sirah . Good, though! Especially good with a pepperoni pizza
- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
Very ripe, fruity, grape-y flavors. Not particularly complex
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
Intense fruit on the nose. Balanced wine though just a very little high on acidity for my taste.
- Von** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Long finish
Great berry aromas – raspberry, blackberry and cherry, some sweet tobacco. Good food and sipping wine. The acidity would compliment pasta with tomato sauce. An uncomplicated, but pleasantly refreshing wine.



WINE "J"

2003 FOPPIANO Estate Reserve
Russian River Valley

\$45
15 % alcohol

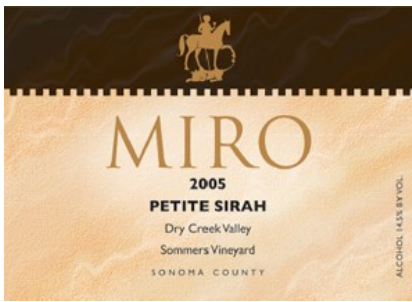
The story of the Foppiano family goes back to 1855, when Giovanni Foppiano arrived in Healdsburg from Genoa, Italy, hoping to make a fortune in the gold mines. The family winery was started in 1896, and during Prohibition, the winery was forced to dump 100,000 gallons of wine in a nearby creek – which literally ran red with wine. Five generations later, the Foppianos still own their winery and have become one of the passionate producers of Petite Sirah in the State. Foppiano is now an all red-wine brand. The 2003 petite sirah we tasted was only released in fall of 2008.

100% Petite Sirah grapes Barrel aged 12 months in new French oak. Only 350 cases produced.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Cherry, light and dark fruit and rose petals. Noticeable alcohol. Spice on the finish.
- Cory** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Black fruit and spice aromas. Unfortunately, the fruit in this wine is totally overwhelmed by the hotness and acidity.
- James H** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Great nose – with cedar, oak and spice. A pleasant wine but very slightly hot. Aging potential 2 – 3 years.
- Mary** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Med- full body, Med- long finish
A unique wine with a nice nose of cranberry, caramel, eucalyptus and currants.. A little hot but enjoyable, with a creamy mouthfeel. Try it with pork tenderloin with mustard sauce – or lamb.
- Rob** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Med- long finish
Some fruit aromas then lots of alcohol. Tannin accentuated by the alcohol. If it wasn't so hot, it would benefit from aging.
- Mark** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Full body, Med -long finish
Black cherry aroma. A bright fruit-forward wine that has good balance. High alcohol is subdued by the acid and tannin. A delightful wine that will stand up to hearty stews or barbecue.
- Ingrid** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-short finish
Black currant aroma, dense color. Almost a dessert wine – chocolate, fruit, cheese would pair well.
- Jim A** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-long finish
Pure petite sirah – classic style. Suitable for food and sipping.
- Linda** **Fruit :** Lacking **Acid:** Excessive **Tannin:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Did not comment on this wine.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Complex nose of fruit and spice. Agreeable, well-balanced wine with complex nose, medium body and finish. I like it.
- Von** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
Yummy nose of blueberry, roses, cherry and dark plums. Dense color. Silky mouthfeel, fruit forward character carried the heat fairly well.

WINE “K”



2006 MIRO
Dry Creek Valley

\$30
14.5 % alcohol

Yet another winemaker for a well-known, highly respected winery starts to produce his own private label, and in this case, the label carries the winemakers first name –

MIRO. Miro Tcholakov, winemaker at Trentadue Winery in the Alexander Valley has been producing his own label Petite Sirah since 2001. He made his first petite sirah 18 years ago and loves the grape – describing it as powerful, bold , and “dark and delicious”. The grapes come from both valley floor and hillside vineyards.

100% Petite Sirah Barrel aged for 17 months in new European oak barrels 369 cases produced

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Candied fruit aromas with floral undertones. Dark fruit on the palate. A nice, balanced wine, smoother than the average Petite Sirah, with spice on the finish. Foods: lamb and burgers.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
A nose of dark red fruits and pepper. A nicely balanced wine with good fruit and a finish that calls you back for more. Not a complex wine but quite pleasant indeed. Will pair well with lamb or pork dishes.
- James H** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-short finish
Spicy, dark fruit aromas. Jammy flavors and soft tannins. An enjoyable drink-now wine.
- Mary** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Strawberries and floral notes on the nose. A well-balanced wine with just the hint of sweetness and just a little hot – but soft. I think it would be an easy wine to drink by itself or to pair with food.
- Rob** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Almost cola-like aromas – cherry and dark berries. A viscous wine that will age for 5 8 years and go well with rich food.
- Mark** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Excessive / Full body, Med -long finish
Fruity, slightly sweet aromas. A full-bodied, slightly astringent wine that would pair well with a juicy burger and fries.
- Ingrid** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Med-short finish
Peppery, fruity aromas. This would be a great summer grill wine – with fish and barbecue vegetables.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
There's a sweet quality to this wine that would make it go well with Thai food.
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Fruity spicy aromas. This is a bold, spicy, fruity wine that needs food – pasta with pesto would be good.
- Bill** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
A nicely balanced wine with fruit on the nose. A pleasing wine – both for food and for sipping.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Nice aromas! Lots of dark berries, currants and cassis. A mouthful of juicy fruit. A rich, silky mouthfeel and all-around balanced wine. Succulent, lingering finish with fruit, that makes you want more.

AND FINALLY...

A VERY SPECIAL, AND ONGOING THANK YOU TO...

Linda and *Donna*, the delightful owners of **PELICAN ART GALLERY** in Petaluma who continue to so graciously offer their beautiful gallery for our tastings. We're surrounded by beautiful art while tasting exciting wines. Life is good.

Incidentally, it turns out that Linda has an impressive palate for evaluating wines and has become an indispensable member of the panel! Donna's waiting for us to do a Beer Tasting!

**SEE YOU NEXT MONTH FOR MORE
WINES TO EXPLORE,
MORE WINES TO ENJOY!**

