

FEBRUARY 2009 WINES – Part 1

▶ 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

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! – At least half of them.

WE HAD SO MANY WONDERFUL WINES TO TASTE FOR FEBRUARY – TWICE AS MANY AS NORMAL. SO HERE ARE THE FIRST SIX. YOU'LL FIND MORE **MADRIGAL** AND **EOS**, PLUS **CHRISTOPHER CREEK**, **MIRO** AND **FOPPIANO** IN MARCH!

LISTED IN THE ORDER TASTED – TASTING REVIEWS FOLLOW

Wine A	☐	2005	MADRIGAL Reserve	Barberis Vineyard	Napa Valley	\$50
Wine B	☐	2006	EOS	Estate	Paso Robles	\$18
Wine C	☐	2006	GIRARD		Napa Valley	\$28
Wine D	☐	2006	AUGUST BRIGGS	Red Hills	Lake County	\$35
Wine E	☐	2006	LOST ANGEL (EOS)		Central Coast	\$14
Wine F	☐	2004	LA STORIA	Estate	Alexander Valley	\$28

➤ 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 "A"

2006 MADRIGAL Reserve Barberis Family Vineyard \$50
Napa Valley 14.8 % alcohol

Since the late 1930's For three generations the Madrigal family have been vineyard managers for some of Napa Valley's most esteemed wineries and vineyard owners. The winery's history began with Petite Sirah and it's still a personal and popular favorite. This is the inaugural Petite Sirah bottling of Madrigal's Reserve series and only 50 cases were produced. From the vineyards of longtime growers and friends the Barberis family, the vines were planted five years ago specifically for this Reserve bottling.
100% Petite Sirah Barrel aged 17.5 months in new and 2-year old French and American Oak

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body , Med-long finish
Cedar aroma. Flavors of dark fruit, plums. Aftertaste of pepper and spice. Pair with duck breast with cassis sauce.
- Cory** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Nice nose of raspberry, blueberry and wet earth. A little high on acid, a bit hot, with a little bitter in finish.
- James H** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Rich, dark-berry and cedar nose. Inviting nose but flavors lost in the alcohol. Hot finish.
- Mary** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
Great nose – cherry, rose, orange blossom. Nice, flavorful wine with pleasant tannins. Could just drink it on its own.
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
Aromas of cherries and blackberries. A dry wine that would be great with a fig reduction sauce. A wine for red meat and perhaps game. Yummy.
- Mark** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Medium finish
A bright earthy wine, reasonably balanced with a forward blast of blackberry. Can age 4 – 8 years.
- Ingrid** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Long finish
Raspberry aromas. Intense mouthfeel. Good with a hearty dish – spinach lasagne. Blue cheese.
- Jim A** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
A rather "hot" wine but unobjectionable. Nice balance of dryness and fruit. Good with pizza – too hot for sipping.
- Linda** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-short finish
Beautiful, rich color. Berry aromas. A nice wine but the finish seemed to disappear. I like a bit more tannin but I'd probably buy it.
- Bill** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Deep purple color and spicy aromas. A very full-bodied wine that could age for another year or so.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Aromas of raspberries and cherry. A very nice wine – silky mouthfeel, good with food and sipping but just a bit hot. Would be even better with lower alcohol.



WINE "B"

2006 EOS
Paso Robles

Estate

\$18
13.5 % alcohol

In Greek mythology, "EOS" was the name given to the "Goddess of the dawn. Legend has it that every morning she lifted the sun over the horizon to begin a new day. This symbol seemed the perfect expression of the love of the land and the environment that, after 20 years, has put it EOS winery on a unique path – a path of sustainability and 100% reliance on Solar Power – a major first for any winery.

100% Petite Sirah

Barrel aged 24 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
Lovely nose of dark fruit – blueberries, blackberries. A lovely wine with a melange of dark fruit from start to finish. This would be nice with pork roast and a raspberry and sour cream sauce.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Blueberry and spice on the nose that continue to mingle in your mouth, all the way through to the finish. It could use a couple more years in the bottle to integrate a bit more – then drink up!
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
Delightful wine! Woody, spicy, dark berries – very pleasant, nice balance, and it could age nicely for another 3 – 5 years.
- Mary** *Did not comment on this wine.*
- Rob** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Lots of sweet blackberries on the nose. To me it's a bit tannic and could go well with a barbecue with a St. Louis sauce. Has aging potential – 6 – 10 years.
- Mark** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
A bold, fruity wine with high initial tannins that give it good aging potential – 4 – 10 years.
- Ingrid** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-short finish
A rather mild and dry wine that would be nice with fruit and cheese – a picnic wine!
- Jim A** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
A very nice, pleasant wine. Lots of cherry flavors but not overdone. Good with pasta, good for sipping.
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Beautiful color and nice fruity aromas. Yum! Cranberry overtones with a bold finish. This is a very drinkable wine and would be nice with a Thanksgiving style meal. I'd definitely buy this.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Aromas of fruit and spice. Wine has excellent fruit / acid / tannin balance and a finish that retains all the good features of the wine. Also a good food wine.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
Ripe dark fruit aromas – dark cherry, even raspberry, and just a hint of earthiness. Wine has soft tannins, good acidity and a pleasant fruity finish. Would be good with a rich stew.

WINE "C"



2006 GIRARD
Napa Valley

\$28
14.5 % alcohol

Founded 32 years ago, in 1995 its estate was sold to Dean and Deluca, and it simply existed in name only. Then in 2000, Pat Roney, a sommelier and former president of Chateau St. Jean in Sonoma purchased the brand and started making wine under its label again with the help of winemaker Marco DiGiulio, cranking out some fabulous wines in the last 4 years. Girard was named "Artisan Winery of The Year" for 2004 by [Wine & Spirits Magazine](#).

87% Petite Sirah, 13% "field blend" Aged 18 months on French and American Oak

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Dark fruit aromas. Good mouthfeel but alcohol too high. Cherry, pepper and spice.
- Cory** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
A beautiful dark garnet color, nice nose of dark fruits, but at present a highly tannic wine that needs a few years to mellow out. There is enough fruit to stand up to the aging process.
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Vanilla and slightly over-ripe berry aromas. Good balance, but detectable alcohol. Long finish but very slight bitterness at end.
- Mary** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Woody aroma. A spicy, flavorful wine that would be great if it weren't so hot.
- Rob** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Big, black cherry aromas that linger on the palate and give the impression of sweetness.
- Mark** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Excessive / Full bodied, Med-long finish
A big, hot wine with eye-popping fruit, pepper and a silky, musty finish. A high tannin wine that needs time to mellow.
- Ingrid** **Fruit and Tannin:** Excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Full bodied, Long finish
Black currant aromas and pepper. Dense and peppery flavors – high alcohol?
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-short finish
A very dry wine that's low on acidity. Food would help – red meat.
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Full bodied, Long finish
Very full, spicy and tasty wine! Dark cherries and berries. Lovely finish. I'd buy it.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Well balanced wine that would go well with food.
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
Complex aromas of plums, very ripe blackberry, dark cherry and cedar. Big, powerful mouthful of wine that has some heat in the finish. Could use hearty flavored, but not spicy, food fare – perhaps a big rich stew.



WINE “D”

2006 AUGUST BRIGGS
Lake County

Red Hills

\$35
14.8 % alcohol

Another dream, another small family winery! After 10 years of making wine for other wineries – from Oregon to Sonoma Country, August “Joe” Briggs bottled the first wines under his own label in 1995. The 2006 vintage is the seventh vintage from Black Rock Ranch, Red Hills, Lake County. The area is named for its dark red volcanic soils, but the soil here is particularly unique as there is broken obsidian (black volcanic glass) mixed with the red soil. The vines are head trained and yield only 2 – 3 tons per acre.

100% Petite Sirah Aged 15 months in mostly 2 – 3 year old American oak barrels
Unfined / unfiltered 479 cases produced

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Aromas of cherry and raspberry. Smooth mouthfeel with a lot of cherry, but a little hot. Should stand up well to stronger flavor foods – duck or pork with a cherry sauce.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Dark cherry, forest floor and spice on the nose. Nice flavors that reflected the aromas but it was a bit too hot for my taste.
- James H** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish
Delightful nose – dusty, woody dark ripe berries. It's hot, and acidity is a bit awkward though should age well for 5 – 10 years.
- Mary** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid:** slightly excessive **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Yummy, fruity, sweet black currant nose. This wine was hot, but the flavor matches the nose – lots of berry and black currant.
- Rob** **Fruit:** Ideal **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Cherry and eucalyptus aromas. This wine is a bit hot. Game meats might be a good pairing.
- Mark** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Med-full body, Medium finish
Aromas of currant and earth. A beautiful wine with nice lingering fruit. Will age 5 – 8 years
- Ingrid** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and in balance / Full bodied, Long finish
Full bodied wine with cherry aromas. Nice for sipping or with Italian food. Serve with chicken Cacciatore. Really enjoy this one!
- Jim A** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly lacking **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
A very dry wine – a little low on fruit and high on alcohol. Try with a thick steak.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Fruity aromas. I'd like a bit more fruit in this one and a little softer tannins.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
A well-balanced wine. Fruit aromas – deep purple color. Good wine for food.
- Von** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-long finish
Yummy fruit aromas – ripe blackberries and cassis. Inky purple color. Big, ripe fruit style.. A little too hot to be an ideal food wine, but I loved the aromas.



WINE “E”

2006 LOST ANGEL (EOS)
Central Coast

\$14
13.5 % alcohol

There's a fable behind the name “Lost Angel”, a new label for EOS winery in Paso Robles. As told in the fable the “Lost Angel” settled on the Central Coast of California, the closest thing to heaven, and cried the tears that brought this brand to life. The grapes for this wine come from vineyards between Paso Robles and Santa Barbara and the goal of these wines is an easy-drinking, fruit-forward style of wine.

100% Petite Sirah Aged 12 months in neutral oak

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
Very interesting nose of candied fruit with a floral note. Flavors of cherry and licorice and spice on the finish. Pair with pork or duck with roasted grapes.
- Cory** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Medium finish
Chocolate cherry and Kirsch aromas. Very “showy” wine. If you like big fruit go for it.
- James H** **Fruit:** Very excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Very lacking / Light body, Medium finish
Very fruity, simple nose. Nearly all fruit. Seems to have some residual sugar. Drink now.
- Mary** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medi-full body, Medium finish
Pretty nose – blackberry syrup. A jammy, fruity wine. Blackberry, fig and raisin flavors. Smooth, almost creamy mouthfeel. I'd pair it with a ripe cheese.
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Excessive **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
Aromas of figs and blackberries. Marinated prunes and dried figs with meaty aftertaste.
- Mark** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal **Acid:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Med-short finish
A mostly jammy, fruity wine that's fairly well balanced. Not much aging potential.
- Ingrid** **Fruit:** Very excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
Blackberry aromas. This is a fresh, sipping wine. Doesn't need food, but perhaps a blackened salmon might be nice.
- Jim A** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-short finish
A pleasant, interesting, fruity wine. Good to sip, or possibly with red pasta.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Excessive **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Medium finish
Not a particularly complex wine. Has a “grape” character to it with a raisin finish.
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Excellent wine with complex nose – fruit, citrus, berries. Silky mouthfeel and good balance.
- Von** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-light body, Med-short finish
Blackberry, cherry syrup and some floral notes in the nose. A lighter, fruitier style wine. Simple and uncomplicated. Mostly a sipping wine (with slight residual sugar?).

WINE “F”



2004 LA STORIA Estate
Alexander Valley

\$28
15.0 % alcohol

“La Storia”, the name settled on for Trentadue's Reserve wines is Italian for “The Story”, and the story behind Trentadue family and the wines they produce is truly fascinating – dating back to 1957 when the family first moved to Sonoma County and bought land for vineyards in the Alexander Valley. . There's something about the Italian sense of style, and the La Storia bottle itself is elegant and spectacular. The original owners, Leo and Evelyn Trentadue, still own the winery today.

90% Petite Sirah, 10% Syrah Barrel aged 20 months in new and older American and European oak

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Med-full body, Med-long finish
A nose of both dark and light fruits. A nicely balanced wine with a bit of dustiness.
- Cory** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced / Medium body, Med-long finish
Nice nose of dark fruits and hint of clove and – a bit hot. Balanced wine. Age a few years.
- James H** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Wonderful aroma! Very rich, woody and spicy. Very slightly hot. I would love this wine if it had a bit more backbone to support the fruit.
- Mary** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive **Tannin:** Ideal / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Nice nose. Although higher in alcohol than I like, I found some really nice flavors – a lot of fruit, plus some tobacco, tea and chocolate.
- Rob** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Aromas of spice and licorice – a little medicinal. Somewhat tannic, could benefit from 2 – 4 years aging.
- Mark** **Fruit and Tannin:** Excessive **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
Cherry and other fruit aromas. A big, hot, earthy black cherry infused alcohol bomb. Needs a big juicy rare steak and mashed potatoes.
- Ingrid** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Ideal and balanced, but excessive / Full body, Long finish
Strong, sweet cherry aromas. This one has a kick! Serve with a hearty stew – venison, duck.
- Jim A** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive **Acid:** Ideal / Med- full body, Med- long finish
Deep, dark, somewhat sweet and fruity, but I like that. Finish is a bit flat. Try with spaghetti.
- Linda** **Fruit:** Somewhat lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Long finish
This wine has a very lasting finish that I personally did not care for. Flavor was overwhelmed by the alcohol
- Bill** **Fruit, Acid:** Ideal **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
Excellent, intense nose, very balanced wine. Good with tomato sauces, barbecue, Coq au Vin.
- Von** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive, **Acid and Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
Bright fruit aromas – fresh raspberries, mint, cherries and plums. Nice wine but a little hot. Licorice and dark berry flavors. Liked it more as it sat in my glass.

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!

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

