



Richard's Picks -- Petite Sirah Tasting! ~ October 2005

Petite Sirah is still a bit of a mystery to most people, and it's no wonder. After years of experts claiming that the Petite Sirah grape had no relationship to the Syrah grape, scientists have now issued an about-face and connected the grape DNA dots. Beyond this, there just isn't much of the stuff made; so many people have not had much opportunity to taste it. Finally, Petite Sirah, when you can find it, can be overly alcoholic and jammy.

But when it's good? Absolutely delicious. Inky dark, with loads of body and flavor and tannins, this is a wine for hard core red wine lovers. It pairs best with simply prepared grilled meats and, especially, game. Think venison stew. Wild boar chops. Grilled squab and quail. There's something about smoky foods that beautifully enhance these jammy, spicy, voluptuous wines. Smoked cheeses work pretty well, too - smoked, aged Gouda being a great example.

We recently rounded up a slew of Petite Sirahs, gathered a group of willing victims, got everyone good and liquored up, and sent them on their way... No, seriously. It was great fun lining up a bunch of these babies, with prices that ranged from \$10 to nearly \$50, and tasting through the lot. There were several surprises at all price levels - here are our notes!

Marr Cellars 2001 Petite Sirah California Cuvee Patrick (\$13). Dried cherry and wild berry flavors are backed by dusty tannins and a slightly austere finish. Needs food, but still an overall appealing wine and a good value. Ready to drink now.

Marr Cellars 2002 Petite Sirah California Tehama Foothills (\$28). Quite nice, with lush chocolatey notes weaving through ripe red berry and cherry fruit, cinnamon and allspice, and a subtle kick of black pepper on the finish. Ready to drink now and over the next three or four years.

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