

**HARVEST DATES:**

Sept. 3 – Oct. 13, 2004

**BLEND:** 70% Syrah, 24% Grenache, 3% Petite Sirah, 3% Alicante Bouschet. Estate-grown fruit from Monterey County comprised 94% of the blend, with the balance from independent growers.

**WINEMAKER NOTES:** Grapes were harvested at an average 25.4° Brix, fermented in stainless steel tanks, then aged for 13 months in a combination of new French oak barrels (40%) and two-year-old French oak (60%). The wine was blended and bottled in June, 2005.

As Le Mistral becomes more Syrah based, flavors become more concentrated and intense. The ripeness of the 2004 vintage is perfectly expressed in this wine, which is full of flashy black fruit and licorice, elegant tannins, and a polished finish that lingers on the palate.

**VINTAGE NOTES:** High quality and significantly reduced crop yields characterized the 2004 harvest, which was in turn influenced by the previous growing season.

In every vintage, the prior year's weather pattern influences the development and health of the bud responsible for the next year's cane and grape cluster. In 2003, unseasonably cool weather conditions prevailed from March to the beginning of

June, with 13 inches of rain falling from March through May.

Although 2003 produced a ripe, healthy crop as weather improved during the summer and into the harvest, the cool, wet spring adversely affected the development of the buds that would remain on the vine after pruning for the 2004 season. As bud-break commenced in 2004, we saw fewer berries per cluster and a commensurate reduction in cluster weight, as well as 80-plus degree temperatures for two weeks in March which resulted in one of the earliest bud break vintners could remember.

This precocious trend carried forward throughout the moderate, pleasant growing season with only a few heat spikes at scattered intervals throughout the summer. Grapes completed veraison early, and ripening produced well-developed sugars by the end of August. However, on August 27th a three-week heat spell began with many days measuring over 100 degrees. Some of the ripening fruit became dehydrated and had to be removed from the vines prior to harvesting. Depending on location, crop yields were reduced 10-40%. Our yields ranged from 2.5 tons to less than 1 ton per acre with an average of less than 2 tons per acre for all of our fruit harvested in 2004.

Our job crafting the 2004 red wines was to moderate over-ripe characteristics, but from the very beginning the aromas and flavors drifting out of the fermenters signaled outstanding quality, with formidable fragrance, color, extract and silky tannins, as well as powerful structure in the finish. We are reminded of the 2002 vintage, which produced wines of forward, concentrated flavors with incredible fragrance, depth and power.