



2005 Syrah Wildcat Mountain Vineyard

ORIGIN: The grapes for this Syrah came exclusively from our Wildcat Mountain Vineyard, owned by Steve MacRostie and his partners Nancy and Tony Lilly. Here the vines dig into the sparse volcanic soil and stand firm against the strong winds that race in off of the Pacific Ocean most afternoons. This fog-shrouded mountaintop vineyard is a classic Sonoma Coast site, cool and challenging, and produces wines of great distinction.

VINEYARD NOTES: The 2005 growing season was nicely extended, with the weather remaining quite cool all the way through a rather late, almost leisurely harvest. Yields were customarily low at Wildcat, just a little over two tons per acre, resulting in fruit of intense flavor. Two blocks of different ages, both planted with the Syrah Noir clone, went into this wine. The newer one provided a solid core or ripe, jammy fruit; the older one contributed peppery spice. They were harvested by hand on October 5 and 9, 2005.

WINEMAKING NOTES: The majority of the fruit was gently destemmed, with about 20% whole clusters added back to one of the three small open-top fermentors. Following a three-day cold soak to boost color without increasing tannins, the tanks were inoculated with yeast. The caps were managed with a combination of punchdowns and pumpovers to maximize positive extraction, and the must was pressed after a two weeks. The press wine was separated from the free run, and later judiciously re-combined. The wine was aged in French and American oak barrels, 40% of which were new, for 10 months, with periodic racking for aeration as required. Only the best barrels were selected to form the Wildcat Mountain Vineyard blend. The wine was bottled on August 17, 2006.

TASTING NOTES: Typically dark purple color, with bright aromas of ripe blackberry, cocoa, and allspice. A bit of swirling brings out fresh black pepper and a hint of charcoal smoke. Jam and dark chocolate in the mouth, lush and round, quite soft for such a large-scale wine, with more black pepper and toasty vanilla oak coming through on the finish.

This vintage produced 1896 (750 ml) 6-bottle cases.