



## **FRATELLI PERATA WINERY 2002 SYRAH, ESTATE**

It must be in the nature of Italian winemakers to never be satisfied with what they have done. Like Christopher Columbus, Gino and Joe began with the Genovese background, and took off from there. For the Fratelli, it was the school of winemaking that stretched first from their Italian father and grandfather, to U.C.Davis, to vineyard experiments. Then, talking with Australian winemakers and San Francisco storeowners, the idea for Syrah at Fratelli Perata developed.

It was a long process. The original vineyard was planted in 1980. Syrah burst upon the Paso Robles viticultural area with the advent of Southcorp (Australia, Penfolds) planting Shiraz in Paso Robles and establishing the San Luis Obispo Seven Peaks winery. The more the Australians got attention for their Shiraz, the more the buzz developed. Now most Paso Robles wineries produce some sort of Syrah/Shiraz. And, indeed, Fratelli Perata added Syrah to the vineyard, with the first small production a 2001 vintage.

Why are these Rhones attractive? The best French wines are dark, requiring aging. A famous one is an 80% syrah, 20% viognier blend. The Australians typically blend their Shiraz with a good dose of Cabernet Sauvignon. For Fratelli Perata, it is a variety that does extremely well in the area, responds best to our way of viticulture, is multi-dimensional as a wine, and moves through the winery quickly. Ours is 100% Syrah, to highlight the spicy notes. Thus it requires some bottle aging to tame the tannins.

Prone to producing too large a crop to make a wine with finesse, the syrah is pruned and thinned to concentrate the spicy fruit flavors. We can pick it at a good Brix, then, when it has an abundance of deep color and classic flavors. The 2002 was harvested on October 12th at a Brix of 24.0 pH of 3.7. This was as ripe as the young vines were able to go.

After aging in a combination of new French oak and older, neutral French oak barrels, the wine was bottled February 14, 2004. As the second vintage from relatively young vines, production is still small.

The best winemakers worldwide give this variety a brief barrel aging. However, it is in the bottle that the tannins and the flavors come together. Our 2001 was pretty much an acid rocket when released to the club. By October it married well with the Basque Mahon cheese, by Thanksgiving it was wonderful with goose. Now it can be sipped while making dinner. A rapid transformation compared to our Cabernets and Merlots.

With the 2002, the classic bacon aspect of the wine is very pronounced, with undertones of blackberry, black pepper, and coconut. The acidity is much milder at this age compared to the 2001, but it will require bottle age to tame the bacon and let the ripe fruit return to the nose.

Enjoy at the end of the summer, or drink it now with a thick slab of ham from the BBQ.