

Week of 09-04-07

Red Bag Clues:

Grape -

From the 40s on this grape (often along with many other unknown varieties) was used to produce flavorful generic “Burgundy”.

Much confusion has surrounded this grapes identity and origin until DNA testing in 1997. The grapes normally produce wines with solid tannins and good color, which make it an excellent blending partner.

On its own, it is well liked as a dark, well-balanced, sturdy, red wine of interesting flavor. It is a cross of Peloursin and a popular peppery red varietal.

Dr. François Durif, propagated the grape trying for resistance to powdery mildew and named it after himself, in the late 1870s.

Known by two names; we are looking for the name it is bottled under in “this” region.

Region -

3,200 acres of this grape are planted in this hot southern growing area.

A mostly agricultural region the largest city has approximately 150,000 people.

Major crops include lettuce, strawberries, and artichokes.

Producer –

Bonded in 1964, the winery is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains and consists of 16 acres: 9 planted to Pinot Noir.

The Estate Vineyard is in the Santa Cruz Mountain appellation, at 2,200 feet. It has a cool southwesterly exposure, overlooking the Monterey Bay and Pacific Ocean.

Total production is 60,000 cases per year, including Pinot Noir, Petite Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel and Chardonnay.

Your Best Guess???

Tasting notes: Intense fruity aromas of raspberry and blueberry evident by it's rich color in the glass. Full, dense and fleshy texture with a long velvety finish.

Tasting Notes - Selected from vineyards primarily in the southern parts of Monterey County and Paso Robles. This wine displays intense fruity aromas of raspberry and blueberry. Full, dense and fleshy texture with a long velvety finish.

Additional information about 2005 David Bruce Central Coast Petite Sirah:

Varietal: Petite Sirah - A red grape variety found in both North and South America that has definitely become an important varietal in warm regions within California. The grapes normally produce wines with solid tannins and good color, which make Petite Sirah an excellent blending partner. On its own, Petite Sirah is well liked as a dark, well-balanced, sturdy, red wine of interesting flavor. Here is [a list of our bestselling Petite Sirah](#).

Country: United States - When people consider domestic wine, they normally think about the state of California. The fine viticultural regions within California, including the Napa Valley, Sonoma, Santa Cruz Mountains, Mendocino and Santa Barbara, are capable of growing grapes of world-class quality. But there's plenty of fabulous wine coming from other states, too. Oregon, Washington and New York are also causing eyebrows (and glassware) to be raised around the world. Click for [a list of bestselling items from the United States](#).

Sub-Region: California - With the explosive growth that California's wine industry has seen the past several years, it's easy to view winemaking and grape growing in the Golden State as a recent phenomenon. And while it's true that California's viticultural history is brief compared to several European countries, this state's roots date back well over 200 years. Due to the enormous response to California wine within the United States and worldwide, there are thousands of excellent and diverse wines being produced within the state each year. For our entire selection of California wines, please visit [this link](#).

Petite Sirah / Durif

Petite Sirah is a variety with many fans among consumers. Originally cultivated and labeled as Petite Sirah only in California, its origin was unknown and identification uncertain and could only be speculated upon, until late in 2003.

Historically, the majority of vineyards plantings identified as Petite Sirah were actually mixed varieties of a dozen or more distinct types, but often including grapes with confusingly similar characteristics, such as *Durif*, *Peloursin*, and *Syrah*.

Just over 3,200 acres of grapes identified as Petite Sirah are presently planted in California. Although only a portion of these vineyards have been surveyed, recent DNA evidence from research led by Dr. Carole Meredith at the University of California at Davis has confirmed most plantings to be the same grape as Durif. About 10% however, is Peloursin, which, observed in the field, is practically indistinguishable from Durif, even by expert ampelographers.



It was long theorized this was the case, that Petite Sirah was the same as the lackluster French variety known as *Durif*, a cross of *Peloursin*, yet another unremarkable variety, with the true *Syrah*. A French nurseryman, Dr. François Durif, propagated the grape trying for resistance to powdery mildew and named it after himself, in the 1870s. The inability of Durif to produce distinguished, high quality wines in France effectively nullified the value of its mildew-free attribute, especially since the grape's compact clusters left this variety particularly susceptible to bunch rot.

In the 1940s, Larkmead and Louis Martini sold wines labeled "Duriff". The fruit source for these wines was probably what later became known as Petite Sirah. Most plantings of Petite Sirah were made before the 1960s, when vintners were mainly concerned with producing copious amounts of flavorful blends of generic "Burgundy". Wines that showed varietal identity were of little consequence.

Field-blending was the norm during this time, with many varieties often interplanted. As a result, few vineyards identified as Petite Sirah are "pure". Vineyard blocks are often peppered with vines of Alicante Bouschet, Carignan, Grenache, Mourvedre, the aforementioned Peloursin, or Zinfandel. The reality therefore is that wines from these vineyards labeled "Petite Sirah" to at least some degree are blends, accidentally if not purposefully.

Although the nomenclature is similar and *Petite Sirah* is a true offspring of *Syrah*, the vines and grapes of parent and child are quite different and distinct from one another and these varieties should never be used synonymously. In April, 2002, the [ITB](#) announced they will forthwith consider Petite Sirah and Durif synonymous for use on wine labels.

As many as sixty California wineries today produce varietal Petite Sirahs for fans and followers. The first to do so were Concannon and the original Souverain, both from the 1961 vintage. Some vintners choose to spell it as "Petit Sirah", "Petite Syrah", or "Petit Syrah" and , although this is no doubt intended to provide some advantage in the marketplace, it merely serves to confuse consumers and defer their attention. These variant spellings are also used in other countries where the grape has migrated: Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

At four to eight tons per acre, Petite Sirah is a fairly good producer. The vines are sturdy and fairly long-lived and thrive in many types of soil. The berries are somewhat prone to sunburn. Their tight grape clusters are also subject to rot when damp or rained upon. Typically a midseason ripener, however, this is not usually a problem in California.

Petite Sirah has long been an important blending grape, prized primarily for its deep color and fairly intense tannin. It is the variety most often chosen to blend into zinfandel for added complexity, body, and to tone down the tendency of zins toward "jammy" fruit.

Duriff



On its own, the flavor of Petite Sirah can be vaguely black peppery, but can mostly be described as "vinous" and, although agreeable, pleasant, and sometimes delicious, not highly distinctive. Nevertheless, wines made from Petite Sirah age slowly and can survive fairly long cellaring of ten years or more.

Petite Sirah Timeline

(Special thanks to Louis M. Foppiano of Foppiano Vineyards, for his generous contribution of the original Petite Sirah timeline, for which 95 percent of what follows is given by the Foppiano family. It was developed by Louis and his staff, in order to have Petite Sirah take its rightful place in U.S. viticultural history, as an American Heritage varietal. Without his generous contribution, this timeline would not be so readily available.)

1880 - Dr. Francois Durif, a grape nurseryman working in southern France, released a new variety that he named after himself. It grew from a seed he extracted from fruit of the old French variety Peloursin. Dr. Durif didn't know the pollen source at the time, but we now know that it was Syrah. The combination of Peloursin and Syrah resulted in fruit with saturated color and very dense fruit clusters.

1878 - Syrah was introduced into California. Some growers referred to this low-yielding type of Syrah as "Petite Syrah".

1884 - Durif was introduced into California. Some growers called it Petite Sirah, which was a name commonly used for Durif in some parts of France.

1890 - Livermore Herald, "A Million Grape Cuttings", January 30, 1890 - ([Download PDF](#))

1890's - Phylloxera destroyed virtually all the true Syrah vines in California

1897 - Petite Sirah is one of the first *Vitis vinifera* to replace the Mission grape as an experimental, varietal transplant in California. Petite Sirah is replanted in California, and regains popularity. (Petite Sirah at the time could have been any of several dark skinned varietals, including the Petite Sirah clone.)

1900 - Petite Sirah became a popular variety in California. (The name Petite Sirah was used for several varieties in California at that time, but most of it was probably Durif.)

1904 - Historical document from Concannon Vineyard ([Download PDF](#))

1905 - Letter to James Concannon regarding the purchasing of varietals. ([Download PDF](#))

1920's - During Prohibition, Petite Sirah was shipped from California to home winemakers in the eastern U.S.

1930's - Approximately 7,500 acres of Petite Sirah in California

1960's - Approximately 4,500 acres of Petite Sirah in California.

1964 - Concannon Vineyards of Livermore Valley released the first non-vintage 1961 Petite Sirah.

1970's - French ampelographers Paul Truel and Pierre Galet examined Petite Sirah vines growing at UC Davis and identified them as Durif. Professor Harold Olmo at UC Davis continued to believe that Petite Sirah in California was a mixture of at least three distinct varieties.

1976 - California Petite Sirah acreage peaked at around 14,000

1988 - California's Petite Sirah crop has diminished to 5,000 acres, divided between Sonoma, Napa, Monterey, and the Central Valley.

1990 - California has about 1,400 acres, as does Argentina.

1993 - Approximately 3,023 acres of Petite Sirah in CA.

1995 - Petite Sirah acreage in California dropped to a low of 2,400

1996 - At the University of California at Davis, Dr. Carole Meredith and her colleagues determined by DNA comparisons that

- almost all (more than 90%) of the vines in Petite Sirah vineyards are Durif and the rest are Peloursin (the mother of Durif)
- Durif is the offspring of a cross-pollination between Peloursin and Syrah which means it received half of its genes from each of those varieties

Peloursin is a very old French variety from the Isere region of France, on the east side of the Rhône River. Syrah is the ancient noble variety from which the great Northern Rhône wines of Côte Rôtie and Hermitage are made. So California's Petite Sirah (aka Durif) has a distinguished French pedigree.

2001 - California Petite Sirah acreage has grown to over 4,000 acres

2002 - [The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms proposed that Durif be approved as a synonym for Petite Sirah](#)

2002 - Foppiano Vineyards produces the First Annual Noble Petite Sirah Symposium.

2003 - Foppiano Vineyards produces the [Second Annual Noble Petite Sirah Symposium](#).

2004 - Foppiano Vineyards produces the [Third Annual Noble Petite Sirah Symposium](#).

2004 - Concannon Vineyards produces the First Annual Blue Tooth Tour (Southern states and East Coast major metropolitan areas).

2005 - Foppiano Vineyards produces the [Fourth Annual Noble Petite Sirah Symposium](#).

What Does Dr. Carole Meredith Have To Say About Petite Sirah?

Taken from a taped transcript:

"2002 Petite Sirah Symposium at Foppiano Vineyards"

BATF is now considering whether or not to allow the name Durif to be used as a synonym for Petite Sirah. I think that there's a fair bit of confusion on this subject, so it might be useful if I simply review what Petite Sirah is.

To my mind, Petite Sirah is Durif. There is no doubt about this. Some Petite Sirah vineyards, especially old ones, often contain a few vines of other varieties, but when we analyzed the DNA of vines that look like Petite Sirah, more than 90% of them are Durif. The few that are not turn out to be Peloursin, which is the mother of Durif and looks a lot like it.

Old red vineyards are mixtures. You usually find four, or five, or eight, or nine, or ten varieties in there. I've been in some of the old Petite Sirah vineyards, and I've found all kinds of weird stuff. But the same thing happens if you go in an old Zin vineyard, or even an old Cab vineyard. You will find a lot of other varieties. So, everything that looked like Petite Sirah that we sampled was Durif. We don't need to worry that not all Petite Sirah is Durif, because I would say that Petite Sirah is Durif, no questions asked.

So, what that means, when we say Petite Sirah is Durif, is that it's a synonym...that's simply two names for the same variety, just like Shiraz and Syrah; two names for the same variety. It doesn't mean that Durif is like this, and Petite Sirah's like this, and there's some differences. It's just two names.

Now what about the relationship between Petite Sirah and Syrah? What we now know is that Petite Sirah is the offspring of Syrah. Every grape variety has two parents. In the case of Petite Sirah, those two parents are Syrah and Peloursin. That means that half of the genetic makeup of Petite Sirah came directly from Syrah. Syrah is the father of Petite Sirah in the true genetic sense.

Clones are just variants within a variety; so there may well be clones within Petite Sirah, but it's not correct to say that Petite Sirah is a clone of Syrah. They're two distinct varieties, but they're as closely related as two varieties can be.