



2021 SWEET SARAH PORT

TASTING NOTES

This youthful ruby Port-style wine wants to be your dessert's best friend. It isn't trying to knock you out with over-the-top sweetness or alcohol. Yummy flavors of blackberry compote, fruit leather, dried raspberries, figs. Maybe even some chocolate mousse? But that could have been just where our head went when we were tasting it. Bullet points: dessert sweet, but not syrupy. Bright fruit.

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Port-style dessert wines are made by stopping fermentation partway through, leaving a little less than half of the initial grape sweetness still in the wine. This is done by adding a lot of high-proof brandy (enough to bump the alcohol content up over 18%) right when the yeast are at their most active, which can make for tricky timing (read: sometimes in the middle of the night). The high-proof is distilled wine, with very little of its own flavor, which really lets the flavors in the base wine show through.

Composition

100% Syrah

Appellation

Rattlesnake Hills, Yakima Valley

Harvest Date

August 8, 2021

Harvest specs

23 brix, pH 3.29, TA 6.9 g/l

Crush Pad

Destem & lightly crush

Yeast

AWRI 1503

Fermentation

Small open-top fermenters, punched down by hand

Malolactic Fermentation

None

Time on Skins

14 days

Aging

20 months in barrels

Oak

None

Fining/Filtration

Polishing filtration only

Alcohol

18.2%

Production

96 cases

Bottled

May 31, 2023



eleven

PAIRINGS

Chocolate is definitely this wine's best friend, in any of its many forms: torte, mousse, cake, bar, bunny – you choose. Also great with aged cheeses!

AWARDS

Not entered into competitions

VINTAGE DETAILS

2021 will be remembered by many as the vintage of the “heat dome”, though it was also marked by significant wildfire smoke in the western Yakima Valley. The growing season started off warm and dry, with bud break and bloom both a little bit on the early side. For five days at the end of June, though, the state saw triple-digit temperatures that shattered all records. This happened during the early phase of fruit growth and would lead to very low crop levels or uneven ripening in many varieties. It also had some flavor impacts on some varieties: you may notice differences from other vintages, particularly in the LEM and Tempranillo. More significantly for Eleven, though, was the smoke from the Schneider Springs fire on the east flank of Mt. Rainier that blew down into the Yakima valley on a daily basis from the middle of August through the middle of September. This was the largest wildfire in the state in a big wildfire season, with over 100,000 acres burned. Since we get more than half of our fruit from the very western end of the Yakima Valley, this was hugely stressful for us. Ultimately, the only varieties significantly affected were the Petit Verdot and Mourvedre, which we had to leave behind in the vineyard because they tasted very smoky. Some other varieties we had concerns about, but the wines turned out great across the board.

GRAPE VARIETY INFO

Syrah is made in a wide range of styles, but while many domestic wineries produce delicious Syrah-based dessert wines, it isn't a traditional style in Europe, primarily for historical reasons. Luckily, you are here today instead of there! We tend to harvest the fruit for our Sweet Sarah around the same time as our dry Syrah, so it has nice bright fruit flavors, not overripe.

FUN FACTS

Read carefully – although the label says “Sweet Sarah”, your brain may trick you into seeing “Sweet Syrah” (this is what you get for knowing your wine!) While the wine is named for our founder's wife Sarah, “Syrah” is also correct as the wine is made from Syrah grapes. We first used the Sweet Sarah name on the wine we now call La Donella, and the reaction was “a white Syrah? Weird. And you spelled it wrong.”



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