



2021 SYRAH PRIMA DONNA

TASTING NOTES

Prima Donna approaches carrying a tray of caramelized treats, including toffee and s'mores. But then as you continue chatting, you notice she's also very vivacious and colorful, with bright cherries and plums roasted with baking spices. Not your usual restrained Syrah, she's full of excitement. Bullet points: medium body, medium-plus acid, medium tannins. Brighter, redder fruit than a typical Syrah. Toasty notes from oak.

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Cofermenting Syrah with Viognier is a traditional practice in southern France that has been adopted by many new world winemakers. Cofermentation is simply fermenting multiple types of grapes together in one vat. We add the crushed, destemmed Viognier directly to the fermentor with the Syrah, which makes for a dramatic visual as well as a dramatic wine. Including the skins of the Viognier in the fermentation brings some additional tannin to the party, which helps stabilize the color of the Syrah, and it also adds some aromatics that you just won't find in straight varietal Syrah. The remarkable thing about this wine is that it takes traditional cofermentation and turns it up to 11, with 11% of the grapes being Viognier instead of the more-common 1-3%.

Composition

89% Syrah from Elephant Mountain Vineyard, 11% Viognier from Sugarloaf Vineyard

Appellation

Rattlesnake Hills (but labeled with the inclusive Yakima Valley appellation)

Crush Pad

Destem and light crush

Yeast

AWRI 1503

Fermentation

Small open-top fermentors, punched down by hand

Time on Skins

14 days, gentle pressing with manual basket

Aging

20 months in barrels

Oak

None

Alcohol

14.5%

Production

219 cases

Bottled

February 7, 2023



PAIRINGS

Pair this cheeky wine with pork anything (add in a cherry reduction for some fancy), kale lasagna or Cubano sandwiches. Or, fire up the grill! Prima Donna likes drama, so get a nice char going on those veggies and serve with spareribs or other barbecue.

AWARDS

Not entered in 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 a lower-tannin, high color red variety, and tannin helps stabilize color, so some have theorized that cofermenting Syrah with Viognier (which has no red color but some tannin) might help stabilize some of that color. This may be true, but adding the colorless Viognier juice tends to dilute the effect (back to normal color levels ;-). The historical reason for cofermenting the two likely has more to do with adding a little lift to cool-climate Syrah from its native France.

FUN FACTS

Since different varieties ripen at different times, and the same variety grown in different locations (even just a few miles apart) will ripen differently, one of the challenges of making this wine is getting the Syrah and Viognier together in the fermentors.



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