

STRATA VARIA



2023

Against the Grain

Encircled by the wheatfields of the Walla Walla Valley, and featuring a peculiar vine row orientation running perpendicular to its neighboring vineyards, Winesap Vineyard produces a unique Syrah unlike any other grown in the Rocks.

AVA: The Rocks District of Milton-Freewater

Vineyards: Winesap Vineyard

Varietal Percentages: 100% Syrah

Alcohol: 14.6%

Cases Produced: 55

Production Notes: One week prior to harvest, a “pied-du-cuve” was started by picking a small fraction of fruit and leaving it in the vineyard to begin a native fermentation. At harvest, 2/3 of the fruit was destemmed to 1.5 ton, open-top fermenters. The remaining 1/3 was retained as whole clusters. The fruit was foot-tread with maximum berry breakage desired to minimize carbonic maceration. The must was inoculated with the pied-du-cuve created 1 week prior. Punchdowns occurred three times per day. Pressing occurred at dryness. After 1 week settling in tank, the wine was racked to 500 L neutral oak puncheons. The wine rested, unracked, for 18 months prior to bottling. A polishing filtration was performed.

Winemaker's Notes: Winesap Vineyard features a couple of unusual characteristics that make it unique amongst the vineyards located in the Rocks. The vineyard's inter-rows are characterized by a grassy cover crop which leaves the cobblestones less exposed than those of its neighboring vineyards. Furthermore, the vine rows are planted East-West rather than the more traditional North-South. Some combination of these factors contributes to Syrah wines which tend to be a little lighter on “the funk” and higher in jammy, black fruit flavors.

In 2023, I decided to experiment with a number of vineyard “pied-du-cuves”. This is like a wine equivalent of a sour-dough starter. I believe this method is the closest a winemaker can get to ensuring a true “native ferment”. The combination of the vineyard's native yeast strains coupled with the unusual aspects of the vineyard itself, make for a truly unique Rocks Syrah.

As this wine can be a bit shy in the glass for the 1st 30-45 minutes, I recommend pulling the cork and letting the bottle sit for an hour prior to serving. Or, better yet, pour the wine into a decanter. Once the wine opens up, it will astound with complex aromas of blackberry compote, black olive brine, toasted fennel seed, star anise, red pepper flakes, jerky...

-Brent Roberts, Winemaker