

## *Del Rio Vineyards*

This wine is a significant departure from 25 years of focusing on Pinot noir, primarily from our own estate. The grape is Syrah, not Pinot noir, and the vineyard is located 15 miles north of Medford on the Rogue River in southern Oregon.

Del Rio Vineyards has over 180 acres of producing vines and is reputed to be the largest vineyard in southern Oregon. It sits on a rocky, south-facing slope and is managed by a perfectionist. Rob Wallace is not only an outstanding viticulturalist, he knows how to market his grapes. He has talked at least a dozen north Willamette winemakers (including me) into playing seriously with Syrah.

A warm climate grape, Syrah's European home is the Rhone region in the south of France. It is also indistinguishable to the grape the Australians call Shiraz. In the Rhone, it is often blended with other varieties, both red and white, to add complexity. On the recommendation of the "Rhone Ranger" (our friend Randall Graham of Bonny Doon) we added 5% Viognier from Del Rio. The Viognier seems to add a floral hint of the "Stargazer Lilly" to this deep, dark, dense wine.

*Terry Casteel  
Winemaker*

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### 2001 SYRAH • DEL RIO VINEYARDS

Harvest date: September 14, 2001

Grapes at harvest: Brix: 24.5, pH: 3.71, TA: 5.0 gr/liter

Finished wine: Alcohol 13.9%, pH: 3.83, TA: 5.2 gr/liter

Barrel aged 10 months in French oak, 40% new barrels

Bottled unfiltered in September 2002

250 Cases Produced

Suggested Retail \$ 30

**Vintage 2001:** The Rogue Valley is considerably warmer and drier than the Willamette Valley, and Del Rio Vineyards is one of the warmest sites in that appellation. Syrah needs heat and lots of sunlight to ripen properly, and Del Rio has both in abundance. Actually, this wine had finished fermentation and was racked to barrel before we picked the first grape at Bethel Heights!

**Vinification:** All the fruit, including 5% Viognier, was destemmed and blended together in three fermenters. Following a seven day cold soak, the fermenters were inoculated with three different yeasts that were known to favor Syrah. It was fermented hot and pressed on the 16th day at dryness. After overnight settling, it was racked to barrels, 40% new. It was racked twice and bottled unfiltered and unfined prior to the next vintage.

**Tasting notes:** Our first Syrah is a big, dark, earthy wine dominated by black pepper and enticing perfume.