



2014

Sparkling Grenache

Santa Cruz Mtns.

In the course of walking this vineyard to determine ripeness for our Red Grenache, we discovered a section quite low in color from which we decided to make a rosé. While the initial idea was an early release wine full of strawberries, we reckoned without the austerity which the Santa Cruz Mountains soils impart, so that we ended up with a wine of great richness and depth but also aromatically quite closed. While waiting for it to open up, the wine also underwent a spontaneous malolactic, causing us to scratch our heads as to its best use. Our intrepid Assistant Winemaker Mike Faulk, in a flash of brilliance, suggested we make a méthode champenoise sparkling wine.

What a wonderful result! The nose appears both youthful and well-aged at the same time. Fresh aromas of honeydew melon and (finally!) strawberry are joined by rich yeastiness one would ascribe to many years on the yeast.

Because the base wines of the Champagne district of France are always very high in acidity, the tradition there is to mitigate the acidity with sugar. In fact, the traditional Champagne styles Sec, Demi-sec, and Doux range from 6 to 12% sugar. Even today's modern Brut wines are generally 1.5% R.S. or so. But here in California we can take advantage of our lower acidities by bottling a "Brut Zero" with no masking sugar at all, permitting the flavors and innate richness of the wine to come forward, followed by a finish of unparalleled length and complexity.

I had the privilege of pouring this wine at the reception of my recent wedding, attended by many winemakers who attested that this is one of the best sparkling wines they had ever encountered.

My goal is to produce skillfully crafted wines that explore winemaking possibilities beyond the contemporary mainstream.

Vineyard Location: Bates Ranch
Corralitos subregion, Santa Cruz Mountains
5th leaf of experimental planting

Harvest Date: 1 October 2014

Harvest Sugar: 20.7 Brix

Fermentation techniques:
100% crush/destem
Prise de Mousse yeast inoculum
Disgorged after 13 months on the yeast
No dosage

Elevage details:
Malolactic fermentation in barrel
Neutral French oak aged 27 months
TA 6.7 g/L, pH 3.73 at bottling
Alcohol 12.6%

74 cases produced.

For more details, visit www.winesmithwines.com

Clark Smith, Winemaker