

ABEJA



2007
SYRAH

HARVEST DATE: October 16, 2007
VARIETAL COMPOSITION: 97% Syrah, 3% Viognier (co-fermented)
VINEYARD SOURCE: Mill Creek Vineyard, 100% Estate
APPELLATION: Walla Walla Valley
OAK COMPOSITION: 50% French, 40% Hungarian, 10% American
New: 20% 229L barrels, 10% puncheons;
One and two year old: 20% 229L barrels, 50% puncheons
BARREL AGING: 13 months
CHEMISTRY: Alc. 14.5%, pH 3.7, TA .54 g/100ml
BOTTLING DATE: November 24, 2008
RELEASE DATE: May 1, 2009

Our Mill Creek estate vineyard was planted in 2000 and has been farmed using sustainable practices since 2002, leading to its "LIVE" and "Salmon Safe" certifications starting with this vintage. We are proud of the fact that we are farming softly, and although such sustainable methods are initially more costly, they yield fruit that is certainly as good as, and quite possibly better than, fruit produced with conventional farming methods. The benefits to our employees and the long-term health of our land alone are reason enough to maintain these practices.

I will admit that we started making Syrah because it was already planted on the Estate, and now I must confess that I am enjoying over-seeing the growing and making of this varietal. I also continue to gain a greater appreciation for what it brings to the table.

Mill Creek Vineyard is planted on healthy, water-holding soils, so the vines have no problem achieving adequate cane length. Our priority is to get them to stop growing by veraison and achieve uniformity in the vine, which leads to the same in the fruit. Among other things, this requires that early in the season, we open up the canopy on the morning-sun side to allow for more light. The afternoon-sun side is left more shaded until later in the growing season to protect from sunburning. Our achievements in the vineyard and the fact that the vines are now becoming well established, combined with an outstanding growing season, have given me insight into what this vineyard can really do. I like the amount and concentration of dark fruits in the wine. It is pretty rare to smell a freshly poured glass of wine from across the room like you can with this one. The spicy, dense blackberry fruit is backed up in the mouth with fig, black and white pepper, and subtly smoked meats. The mouth has ample grip but leads with a silky sensation of dried flowers, floral lavender blossoms, and tar. It finishes with a nice balance between fruit, acidity, and minerality.

I have been enjoying this Syrah with simple flat breads drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with a little garlic and thinly sliced meat cooked in our brick oven. Slow-cooked baby back ribs and a tangy, spicy barbecue sauce would be wonderful, too.

I have been very lucky to work with many great employees and friends over the years. I would say that a large percentage of these talented folks especially like Syrah. As I continue to understand the many positives of the varietal, I want to recognize those who have opened my eyes to Syrah by recommending music they made me listen to in the cellar. I won't recommend anything by Sublime, but I do suggest *Jambi* by Tool, and *I am the Highway* by Audioslave. If you are feeling on the mellow side, then *Against the Wind* by Bob Seger, or *FM* by Steely Dan.

John Abbott – Winemaker