

# Wine Spectator online

## Tasting Highlights: California's Rhône Varietals

California's Rhône grape-based wines continue to impress, including some exciting Syrahs from the Sierra Foothills

*James Laube*

Posted: Friday, November 02, 2007

The Sierra Foothills, southeast of Sacramento, are now making some of California's most exciting Rhône-style wines. Four Vines, with an Amador Bailey Vineyard Syrah, is joined by Prospect 772 among those excellent Rhône variety-based wines from the Sierra Foothills in this report. Prospect 772 is a new label from Ron and Wendy Pieretti with Jeff Cohn, of J.C. Cellars (and formerly of Rosenblum), overseeing winemaking. Prospect 772's two wines are The Brawler (Syrah and Viognier) and The Brat (Syrah and Grenache), and their prices are excellent.

Elsewhere, Herman Story Syrah is excellent and so is its price, while Paloma branches out with its first non-Napa wine, a Dry Creek Syrah. And the boys at Kosta Browne apparently wanted to prove their success with Pinot Noir is no fluke; they too have a Syrah from Russian River Valley.

Wine	Score	Price
<b>FOUR VINES Syrah Amador County Bailey Vineyard 2005</b>	93	\$38
Creamy oak and rich, supple blueberry and blackberry fruit is focused and fleshy, gaining depth, richness, finesse and polish on the long, luxurious finish. Has wonderful depth and persistence. Drink now through 2011. 440 cases made.— <i>J.L.</i>		
<b>PROSPECT 772 The Brawler Calaveras County 2005</b>	93	\$36
Firm, ripe, intense and concentrated, with rich plum, blueberry, spice, anise, sage and light cedar. Offers complexity, depth and focus, with a long, persistent finish. The dash of Viognier gives this a sweet spot. Syrah and Viognier. Drink now through 2012. 150 cases made.— <i>J.L.</i>		
<b>RED CAR Syrah California Twenty Two 2005</b>	93	\$60
Rich, fruity, deep and complex, with layers of blackberry and dark berry fruit that's well-focused, offering depth, exotic spices and concentration. Ends with a long, supple finish. Drink now through 2011. 111 cases made.— <i>J.L.</i>		
<b>HERMAN STORY Syrah Santa Ynez Valley Larner Vineyard 2005</b>	92	\$28
Dense, tight and firmly tannic, this is a muscular wine, with exotic smoke, tar, dried berry and spicy sage and underbrush flavors. Sharply focused. The crushed berry fruit shines through. Drink now through . 432 cases made.— <i>J.L.</i>		
<b>KRUPP BROTHERS Syrah Napa Valley Black Bart Stagecoach Vineyard 2005</b>	91	\$52
Distinct for its pure plum, berry and spicy, peppery attributes. Clean, tight and focused, gaining depth and complexity. Ends with spice, leather, sage and lavender. Drink now through 2012. 1,219 cases made.— <i>J.L.</i>		
<b>PALOMA Syrah Dry Creek Valley Palomita Hamilton Vineyard 2005</b>	91	\$45

Generous ripe plum, blueberry and spice notes, with a hint of pepper, are smooth and polished, firming up nicely on the finish. Complex and elegant, with deep, persistent flavors that are pure and tasty. Drink now through 2012. 250 cases made.—*J.L.*

**PROSPECT 772 The Brat Calaveras County 2005** 91 \$36

Savory, with supple flavors that build, with spice, dried berry, anise and sage, supported by firm tannins and ending with a hint of spice and cedar. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2011. 150 cases made.—*J.L.*

**CHATEAU POTELLE Syrah Mount Veeder VGS 2004** 90 \$75

Smooth and rich, with a complex mix of spice, pepper, plum and blueberry fruit that's firm, dense and structured, with rich, earthy tannins. Drink now through 2011. 238 cases made.—*J.L.*

**DARIOUSH Viognier Napa Valley Signature 2006** 90 \$35

Intense, complex and vibrant, with spice, floral, fig and melon flavors that gain depth and richness, fanning out nicely on the finish. Drink now through 2011. 1,376 cases made.—*J.L.*

**KOSTA BROWNE Syrah Russian River Valley Amber Ridge Vineyard 2004** 90 \$45

Spicy cola, black cherry and cassis fruit is rich and supple yet almost syrupy, with a nice range of flavors and a hint of lead pencil and cedary oak on the finish. Drink now through 2011. 320 cases made.—*J.L.*

**KRUPP BROTHERS Marsanne Napa Valley Stagecoach Vineyard Black Bart 2005** 90 \$37

Fragrant floral, honey, peach and pear aromas are rich and creamy. Well-focused, intense and concentrated without being heavy. One of California's best Marsannes. Drink now through 2011. 620 cases made.—*J.L.*

**OJAI Syrah California Roll Ranch Vineyard 2004** 90 \$45

Supple, smooth and harmonious, with zesty wild berry and blackberry fruit that's focused and lively, ending with ripe, integrated tannins. Drink now through 2012. 700 cases made.—*J.L.*

**WHETSTONE Syrah Sonoma Coast Guidici Family Vineyard 2005** 90 \$55

Enticing wild berry, plum, spice and pepper turn more austere on the finish. Vibrant and concentrated, this finishes with a persistent mix of complex flavors and firm tannins. Drink now through 2011. 200 cases made.—*J.L.*

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