



# SPRINGTIME UPDATE

You might think that because vineyards are dormant between the winter season and bud break (which occurs in early April) that there is not much to do around the winery and vineyard during this six month timeframe. Nothing could be further from the truth. In actuality this time is used very carefully in order to prepare the vines for the next seasons crop.

Our employees have been extremely busy fertilizing the vineyards, pruning the vines, monitoring the rainfall so that we can irrigate if necessary, spraying to kill

weeds that interfere with the vines, tightening all the vineyard wires, making notes of dead or missing vines to replant in the spring. Employees carefully go through the vineyards to stake the areas that we will plant during the spring and to lay out new vineyard areas.

We also go through each and every vineyard row on tractors and disc the ground to break it open, remove the weeds and make the ground warmer in case of frost. We monitor the temperature closely to make sure it does not get too cold overnight to cause

harm to the vines and to prevent freezing of pipes and damage to our equipment. Tractors must be repaired from extensive use during harvest and we must get our sprayers ready to make rounds through the vineyards when we have approximately six inches of new growth in the spring. During this time the vineyards are sprayed with sulfur and various nutrients.

In addition to the vineyard workload there is work to be done in the winery. We top all of our barrels every two months and we normally run our bottling line heavily in February and April.

## Newly Designed Website

If you haven't been online to visit Rabbit Ridge lately you should visit us soon. We have completely redesigned our website to not only make it more aesthetically pleasing but also more user friendly and more informative. Some

of the newly added features include brand new pictures that are "clickable" which display a larger image, a scrollable index on the left side of the web page as well as links leading to information on all of our wines; past,

current and upcoming releases. We hope that the bright new look and feel of the Rabbit Ridge website will keep you coming back for more information on our vineyards, winery and tasting rooms.

### Inside this issue:

Focus on PETITE SIRAH	2
2007 Reviews and Awards	2
Recipe: Veal Osso Buco	3
Bunny Cuvee Review	3
Employee Faves	4
Employee Milestone	4
Referral Program	4

### Upcoming Events for 2007

- 25th Annual Wine Festival Weekend, downtown Paso Robles City Park, May 18- 20, 2007
- California Mid-State Fair, Paso Robles Event Center, July 25—August 5, 2007
- Paso Robles Olive Festival, August 25, 2007
- Harvest Wine Tour, October 19 - 21, 2007

# Focus on PETITE SIRAH (aka Durif, Petite Syrah)



Developed in the 1870s in France's Rhône region where it is known as *Durif* or *Petite Syrah*, this grape variety is more commonly known by its slightly anglicized synonym, Petite Sirah -- particularly in California.

The result of a cross between the noble [Syrah](#) and a relatively minor Rhône variety, Peloursin, Durif was developed to resist Powdery Mildew, to which Syrah is susceptible. Although mildew-resistant, the tightly-bunched variety was vulnerable to gray rot in the humid southern Rhône. Fortunately, the grape has adapted well to the drier climates of California, and to those of northeastern Victoria, in Australia. In fact, the grape has succeeded better abroad than in its south of France birthplace, where it is now almost extinct.

Its small berries, and consequently high skin-to-juice ratio, allow Petite Sirah to produce wines with high tan-

nin levels, surprisingly high acidity, and thus the ability to age. Characteristically, these wines have dense blackberry fruit character, mixed with black pepper notes. The grape's similarity to parent Syrah became confusing for early planters in California. Starting in the 1880s, some of the original Durif vines were confused for a clone of Syrah and subsequently named Petite Sirah.

Until the push for varietally-labeled wines came to the fore in the 1960s and 1970s, little thought was given to the actual name of this variety in California. It was often added to provide color and body to California's bulk wine production, or used to add richness to North Coast Zinfandel and Barbera. Recent research by Doctor Carole Meredith, at U. C. Davis, has confirmed many of California's Petite Sirah vines to be Durif. Still, other vineyards thought to be planted to Petite Sirah have been identified as Syrah, Pinot Noir, and even Peloursin, with other plots a

mixture of many varieties. "While winemakers may be content to live with the genetic heterogeneity that is Petite Sirah today, varietal labeling regulations may eventually force the issue," C. Meredith says. "One day, the winemakers may be asked to agree upon a single variety that can bear the name Petite Sirah. Which one will they choose? What is Petite Sirah?" Recent amendments by the TTB (BATF) allow wines to be labeled either Durif or any of the many different spellings of Petite Sirah. By any name, this variety has the ability to create rich, age worthy reds and is reestablishing itself as one California's great grapes.

Highly recommended for further information on Petite Sirah, is the [P.S. I Love You](#) site, with its mission to promote, educate, and legitimize Petite Sirah as a noble variety, with a special emphasis on its California terroir uniqueness.

Source: <http://wine.appellationamerica.com/grape-varietal/Petite-Sirah.html>



## 2007 Reviews & Awards

### 2003 PETITE SIRAH, CHALKROCK, Paso Robles

Gold Medal—Jerry Mead's New World International Wine Competition (03/07)

Bronze Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2004 ALLURE DE ROBLES, Paso Robles

Silver Medal—Jerry Mead's New World International Wine Competition (03/07)

Gold Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2003 VORTEX, Paso Robles Live Oak Road Reserve

Silver Medal—Jerry Mead's New World International Wine Competition (03/07)

Bronze Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2003 LIMITED PASO RESERVE, Paso Robles

Silver Medal—Jerry Mead's New World International Wine Competition (03/07)

### 2004 SARAH'S SYRAH, Paso Robles

Silver Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2005 BRUNELLO CLONE SANGIOVESE, Paso Robles

Bronze Medal—Jerry Mead's New World International Wine Competition (03/07)

Silver Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2004 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, Paso Robles

Bronze Medal—Jerry Mead's New World International Wine Competition (03/07)

Bronze Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2005 VIOGNIER, Paso Robles

Bronze Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2004 SYRAH, Paso Robles

Bronze Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### 2003 PINOT NOIR RESERVE, Paso Robles

Bronze Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

### BUNNY CUVÉE, Paso Robles

Bronze Medal—San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition (01/07)

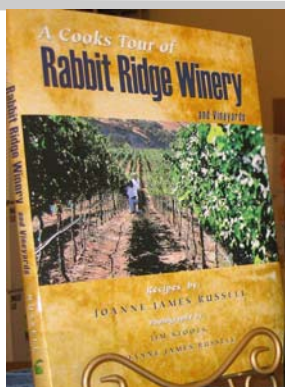
## Recipe: Veal Osso Buco

### Step One

2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1/2 cup flour  
Salt and pepper  
6-8 veal shanks, washed and dried

### Step Two

1 1/2 cup onions, peeled  
1 cup carrots, peeled  
3/4 cut celery, washed  
2 cloves garlic  
1/2 cup Rabbit Ridge Chardonnay  
1 cup veal demi-glace  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves  
1 teaspoon fresh basil leaves  
2 bay leaves



all are well browned on both sides. Remove shanks to a plate and keep warm. Remove pan from heat. Pre-heat oven to 350°.

Chop onions, carrots, celery and garlic in a food processor. Place pan back on stove and turn up to medium-high heat. Add vegetables. Sauté for two minutes. Add wine and deglaze, scraping all the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Add veal demi-glace and tomato paste and stir to combine. Cook for two minutes. Add remaining spices and herbs and stir. Place veal back in pan and turn to coat. Spoon some of the sauce over the top of the meat. Cover and bake in the oven for 1-1/2 hours or until meat is tender. Periodically spoon sauce over veal. Add more wine if sauce becomes too dry. Plate veal and pour sauce on top. Garnish with fresh minced parsley, basil or chopped roasted garlic if desired. Serves 6

### RECOMMENDED WINE:

Rabbit Ridge Syrah, Zinfandel, Primitivo and Petite Sirah

*Recipe courtesy of A Cooks Tour of Rabbit Ridge Winery and Vineyards, by Joanne James Russell*

Place butter and olive oil in a large Dutch oven and place on the stove. Season veal with salt and pepper. Lightly flour veal chops on both sides. Heat butter and oil until simmering. Place as many shanks in the pan that will fit in a single layer. Brown well on both sides. Repeat with remaining shanks until

## Bunny Cuvee Reviewed in the 30 Second Wine Advisor

By Robin Garr. From my pal and one-time Rhone Valley traveling companion Erich Russell at Rabbit Ridge in Central California's Paso Robles comes a special seasonal red, just in time for Easter: Rabbit Ridge "Bunny Cuvee," a hearty drop that Russell bills as "a lush red blend created and bottled once every spring, in limited quantities, to celebrate the Bunny's favorite time of the year."

I might have guessed Zinfandel from its exuberant, fruit-forward berry aromas and flavors and its blockbusterish 14.9% alcohol level, but it's actually a wild blend of varied red grapes that are rarely found in the same glass - about 60 percent of the Bordeaux varieties Cabernet Sauvignon,

Petite Verdot and Cabernet Franc with about 40 percent Petite Sirah - a non-vintage blend of 2004 and 2005 grapes aged in new oak barrels.

Lovers of austere, earthy European wines might want to steer clear, but if you like a big but balanced California red in the older style, this is an honest wine with real character. [...]

This is a very dark reddish-purple wine. A burst of ripe berry fruit and a whiff of vanilla leap out of the glass. Big and ripe in flavor, a mouth full of berries mirror the nose. Fruit-forward and full, oak is present but doesn't dominate, and its hefty alcohol content makes it warm but not incendiary. (April 8, 2007)

**FOOD MATCH:** It worked nicely with a range of dishes on a casual Easter buffet, from sliced ham and Italian-style *gardiniera* to a variety of pizzas. Hold the hard-boiled eggs.

**VALUE:** No complaints at all about this low-teens price point.

**WHEN TO DRINK:** The winery Website indicates that this wine, bottled Nov. 7, 2006, "should age well for a long time." Based on its varietal content and its balance, I would agree. Certainly five years in a quality cellar would do it no harm.

Source: <http://www.wineloverspage.com/wineadvisor2/tswa20070409.php>

# Employee Faves

A common question asked by customers to our tasting room employees is “What is your favorite wine?” So we asked each of our Healdsburg and Paso Robles tasting room employees which Rabbit Ridge wines are their favorites and why. Read on to find out what our “experts” say.

## Rabbit Ridge Winery

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[www.rabbitridgewinery.com](http://www.rabbitridgewinery.com)



## Referral Program!

If you love being a Cottontail Wine Club Member, spread the news to your friends and family! For each new Cottontail Wine Club membership you refer you will receive one FREE t-shirt of your choice (up to a \$21.00 value)!

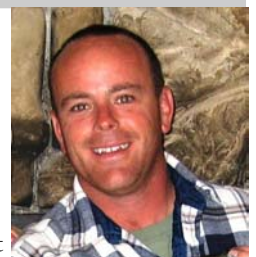
## Milestones

**Congratulations** to Director of Vineyard Operations and Assistant Winemaker Robert Pierce, who celebrated his 10 year anniversary with Rabbit Ridge in February! Robert was originally hired by Erich Russell to farm walnuts on one of our properties. When Erich later learned that Robert had planted his father’s vineyard he approached Robert to ask if he was up to the Rabbit Ridge challenge of planting crazy, cutting-edge plantings that are steeper, spaced closer together and trellised like no other vineyard in Paso Robles. This exciting project was right up Robert’s ally and he was hired as the first Rabbit Ridge employee in Paso Robles.

Robert planted the first close-spaced vineyard in Paso Robles where the vines are four feet apart and the rows are just six feet apart. Critics said we would not be able to farm grapes planted in this fashion and now this is the standard planting procedure for most of the new cutting-edge vineyards in the Paso Robles area.

Robert’s latest project includes planting over 3,800 vines per acre on extremely steep hillsides. The vines are a mere 24 inches apart. We have also planted a true Condrieu tee-pee style planting. This is the first of this style planting in Paso Robles and possibly in all of California. The vines in this planting are 25 inches apart and the rows are only 31 inches apart for over 8,700 plants per acre. There are more exciting projects to come but we will save them for future newsletters.

Robert has grown past just managing and planting the vineyards and is now the Assistant Winemaker. In addition, Robert runs all harvest crews and orchestrates all pickings, runs the bottling line and directs all day to day cellar operations. But more than that, Robert with his wife Jackie have become part of the Russell family here in Paso Robles.



### O.V.Z.

“It’s the reason I work here. It goes with everything or nothing at all. After a bottle of OVZ one night, it led to the best sex I’ve had in 30 years.”  
Laura, Healdsburg Tasting Room

### BRUNELLO CLONE SANGIOVESE

“You can drink this wine with or without food. It’s light and has a nice fruitiness to it. Craig, Healdsburg Tasting Room

### CABERNET SAUVIGNON

“Great wine...great price...full-bodied. Try with a grilled flat iron steak.”  
Mindy, Healdsburg Tasting Room

### AVVENTURA

“I used to think I was more of a white wine drinker, but I’m enjoying this wine...this week. Last week it was the Sangiovese!”  
Sherry, Healdsburg Tasting Room

### ALLURE DE ROBLES

“This is an incredible blended wine. From the first moment you open the bottle, the nose grabs you but the taste hooks you. It’s great with or without food. It has a wonderful fruity taste that goes down smooth and will make you a Rabbit Ridge fan for life!” Eric, Healdsburg Tasting Room

### ALLURE DE ROBLES

“The Allure is my current “favorite.” This wine has the body of a Syrah without the bite. I also like the Sangiovese. OVZ, Syrah and Bunny Cuvee. It depends on my mood. However based on Laura’s favorite, I may change my mind!” Linda, Healdsburg Tasting Room Manager

### ZINFANDEL

“The Zinfandel is my favorite! Its so jammy you could spread it on toast! But I am also partial to the Allure de Robles because it goes great with almost any food, and I also love the Sangiovese, OVZ and Bunny Cuvee!”  
Jessica, Paso Robles Tasting Room

### L.P.R.

“It has lived up to its reputation time and time again. Gender, race, or age - it doesn't make a difference!”  
Rosemary, Paso Robles Tasting Room

### PETITE SIRAH

“The Chalkrock Petite Sirah is so good, it’s my all time favorite. I also enjoy the light fruitiness of the Brunello Clone Sangiovese.”  
Maria, Paso Robles Tasting Room