

2017 SYRAH

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

1341 CASES PRODUCED

Syrah, of all the grapes I've worked with over 35 years, remains my biggest obsession and our flagship wine at The Ojai Vineyard. That said, after many years it remains a misunderstood grape in California; many people aren't sure whether to expect something jammy, thick and sweet or something peppery, savory and lively. Our Santa Barbara County Syrah marks a rather dramatic shift in what we think Syrah from California can be. For years now we have been working on fine tuning the balance of our syrahs, striving for a fresher, livelier, more friendly and drinkable style. We have shifted from using vineyard sources in warm areas to ones located closer to the coast—they produce wines that are more expressive and peppery. And, although I have never willfully chosen to pick stupidly over-ripe grapes, over time it has become apparent that harvesting at lower sugar levels than we have in the past allows us to better capture the essence of syrah. The maturation of syrah grapes follows a change in flavor profile from vegetal and green to spirit-y and peppery to fruity and simple to prune-y and flabby. Catching the ripeness at that magical spot that combines fruit with spice is my goal.

The cool, often foggy climate of northern Santa Barbara County turns out to be one of the most ideal places to grow syrah anywhere outside of the northern Rhone Valley in France (which is where I take my cues with this grape). Here we have three valleys that run East-West and are open to the cold Pacific Ocean, so they feed brisk coastal breezes inland and syrah ripens gradually. Instead of thick, jammy fruitiness that syrah shows from warm vineyards, here you get that mysteriously earthy, exotic and spicy side of the varietal.

BLEND 87% Syrah & 10% Grenache & 3% Barbera
VINEYARDS 51% John Sebastiano, 23% Bien Nacido, & 15% Roll Ranch,
8% Robert Williams, & 3% Rich
ALCOHOL 13.5%
VINIFICATION 7% New French Oak
BARREL AGING 11 Months

PRESS REVIEWS

Jeb Dunnuck

"Always terrific, especially at the price, the 2017 Syrah Santa Barbara County is ideal for those who love cool-climate Syrah with a kiss of California fruit. Pretty blackberry, strawberry, peppery, and bay leaf/forestry notes all emerge from the glass of this medium-bodied red, which has a classy, balanced texture, a kiss of salinity, and outstanding length." - JD 90 Points

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