



Review Round-Up – Syrah Edition | July 2007

Syrah Edition

Incognito Lodi 2005

This wine is not identified on the label as Syrah, and its character takes place on both the spice of that grape with riper, fatter, heavier notes from the other varieties. To be sure, there is great richness found in the wine's milk chocolate, caramel, bake shop layers and its ripe grape sweetness.

86 Points

Novy Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands 2005

This head-turning effort is brimming with ripe berries and sweet oak, and it shows so much black pepper and gamy spice that it could be nothing than Syrah. While fully ripe, very fleshy and quite big in body, it is not heavy-handed and its tannins are nicely managed. Although it dries just a bit at the finish, it can be enjoyed with flavorful meats in the near term, and it has the stamina to age for several years.

90 Points

Novy Judge Family Vineyard Bennett Valley 2005

Yet another Novy Syrah that leads with intense, spicy, decidedly gamy aromas, this very solid, convincingly varietal wine finds a bit of distinction by way of its faint touch of herbs. It is full and balanced to firmness, and its slightly coarse finish is underscored by fairly tough tannins, but its fundamental fruit flights its way through at the finish and points the way to at least three or four years of likely improvement.

88 Points

Novy Santa Lucia Highlands 2005

Showing hints of the gamy spice in its Santa Lucia siblings, this attractive young bottling brings a little more fruit to the table with themes of blackberries serving as its central motif. If slightly supple in feel on entry and slightly tannic and stiff in the back, it will be better with a couple of years in the cellar.

88 Points

Novy Gary's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands 2005

Much like its mate from the Santa Lucia Highlands, this bottling is very ripe and is rife with lots of gamy Syrah spice. It is rich and fairly complex on the palate, but, despite its initial impressions of softness, it is limited by undisguised acids. Its youth seems to work against it just now, but its rigid stance should soften a bit with a few years of age.

87 Points

Novy Russian River Valley 2005

Suggestions of game combined with muddling earthiness in the nose here, but the wine avoids any similar earthy distractions on the palate. It speaks to blackberry fruit in softer tones and keeps its tannins in check, and, if wanting a bit more drive and depth to win outright recommendation, it is mannerly, well-balanced and wholly drinkable stuff.

86 Points

Novy Sonoma County 2005

Finding the spice of Syrah requires a little more effort here than it does with most of the Novy offerings, yet scattered notes of briar and black pepper do keep this one on the varietal track. A bit stiff in the feel and less extracted than most of its kin, it ends on a note of toothy, acid-edged tannins.

85 Points

RockBlock Seven Hills Vineyard 2004 Walla Walla Valley Oregon

Distinct varietal spice is not this wine's strong suit, but its berryish fruit, its creamy oak and its fine sense of polish are the stuff of success all the same. Fairly full-bodied and slightly supple in a way almost suggestive of well-made Merlot, it is temperate in tannin and will drink nicely in the near-to mid-term.

87 Points

Zaca Mesa Santa Ynez Valley 2003

Scattered notes of peppery spice and hints of leather provide a bit varietal distinction to the moderately ripe, but slightly dry aromas and flavors of this nominally fruited effort. A touch shy on bluster, but fairly full-bodied and balanced.

86 Points

Burgess Napa Valley 2004

We have occasionally liked Burgess Merlots, but this vintage has more of the winery's tightly structured style than does of fully expressed varietal fruit. Sweet oak plays a positive role and adds some needed richness to the wiry, stiff character that takes over in the mouth.

85 Points

Burgess Napa Valley 2004

11% Cabernet Sauvignon; 3 % Cabernet Franc. Suggestions of raspberries, milk chocolate and herbs merge with Merlot's more typical themes of ripe cherries in the attractive and fairly forthcoming aromas of this wine. While its flavors momentarily show nice façade of fruit, they simply empty out by mid-plate and surrender to dryness without much of a fight in the coarse and patently unfruity finish.

85 Points

Etude Rosé of Pinot Noir Carneros 2006

Medium cherry pink. There is an uncommon note of complexity to the lightly toasty, specifically varietal aromas of this carefully crafted offering. While a little more straightforward in flavor, it is dry, nicely fruited and neatly balanced with a finishing edge of palate-cleansing acidity/

90 Points

Lee Family Farm Rosé Monterey 2006

This deep, cherry-pink working from winemaker Dan Lee of Morgan captures lots of fresh, wild-cherry fruit and conveys a good sense of vinosity from begging to end. It balances a bit of sweetness with just the right degree of acidity and is solid, foodworthy wine that hits all the right rosé marks.

89 Points

Miner Rosato Mendocino 2006

It may call itself rosé, but this is substantial effort has more weight and substance than a good many light reds. Its mix of dried cherries and dusty spice lend it plenty of varietal authenticity, but it lacks the fruit to fully buffer its hard edges and slight tannic bite.

85 Points