

RIDGE 1994

CALIFORNIA

YORK CREEK

PETITE SIRAH

94 Petite Sirah, York Creek Vineyard, bottled May 96

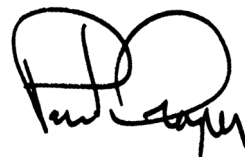
This varietal—along with grenache, carignan, and mataró—came to California in the 1870s from southern and southwestern France. Recent genetic fingerprinting has shown that it is not syrah, nor is it duriff, as some had assumed. Though its Old World counterpart remains a mystery, this grape has made a number of complex and age-worthy wines. Ridge's first York Creek Petite Sirah was the 1971. The 1994 has some of the depth and richness of the early vintages, but with the additional fresh character of fruit from partial whole-cluster fermentations. Approachable as a young wine, it will continue to soften and develop over the next five to fifteen years. PD (4/96)

GRAPES: 93% PETITE SIRAH, 7% ZINFANDEL
SPRING MOUNTAIN ALCOHOL 12.7% BY VOLUME
 PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS BW 4488
 17100 MONTE BELLO ROAD, BOX 1810, CUPERTINO, CA 95015

Brought to California in the 1870s—at the same time as carignan, grenache and mataro (mourvèdre)—petite sirah is assumed to have come from the same general area, southern and southwestern France. It is not the same as syrah, the principal grape of the northern Rhône, but its overall character has more in common with that variety than any other. Dr. Carole P. Meredith of U.C. Davis did the first genetic fingerprinting of petite sirah in 1993. Her results showed that indeed it was not syrah—nor was it the Rhône hybrid duriff, as many had assumed. The origins of petite sirah remain as mysterious as those of zinfandel. In many of California's old zinfandel vineyards, petite sirah is interplanted with carignan or mataro, sometimes with grenache. Having no identified European heritage, it has become as Californian as zinfandel.

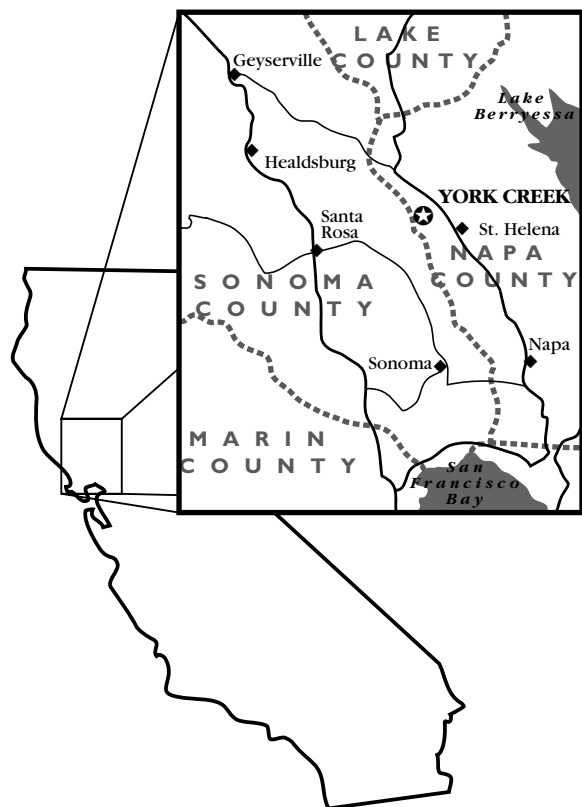
Ridge made its first petite sirah from York Creek in 1971. Today, that wine still rivals the best Rhône's of its era. Over the intervening years, the vines on Dynamite Hill have fully matured—now providing the majority of fruit. Two other small vineyards on the ranch are included here for the first time.

In 1994 we again fermented a portion of the grapes uncrushed, as whole clusters. This adds a freshness to the fruit, and complements the deep, brooding flavors of wines from the fully-crushed fruit. Aged in older oak to accentuate the varietal, the wine's style is big and full—more reminiscent of the seventies and mid-eighties than of recent vintages.



TASTING NOTES

- COLOR:** Nearly opaque, with purple tinges.
NOSE: Classic petite sirah: rosebuds, black pepper, coriander/cumin seed. Fresh, ripe, intensely juicy berry fruit. Lovely, integrated oak. Hints of vanilla and toffee.
PALATE: Each element from the nose repeats and intensifies in the mouth, with the addition of deep licorice and a complex of floral tones. Bright and lively; near-perfect balance. Big, ageworthy.



Location: Spring Mountain, western border of Napa County.

Acreage: 22- to 67-year-old petite sirah, 22.5 acres.

Yield: 3 tons/acre on average

Soils: Gravelly loam

Climate: Cool, mountainous.
 Normal average rainfall, 50".

Elevation: 1250-1800'

Exposure: Southeasterly

Owner: Fritz Maytag