



Optima Wine Cellars - 2006 Dry Creek Valley Petite Sirah

September 13, 2009

The Facts:

Optima Wine Cellars produces 5,000 cases annually, focusing on Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Chardonnay, and Zinfandel Port. Plans are afoot to start including Gewurztraminer sometime in the next few vintages. Winemaker and co-owner (along with his wife) Mike Duffy has a long history that includes stops at Napa Valley stalwart Trefethen and Field Stone in Alexander Valley. The 2006 Optima Dry Creek Valley Petite Sirah is their third vintage of the varietal. The fruit was sourced on the western side of Dry Creek Valley, 200 feet above sea level. In addition to Petite Sirah (92%) this offering has Zinfandel (8%) blended in. Oak aging was accomplished over 15 months in a combination of new and one year old small French barrels. The suggested retail price for this wine is \$32.

Gabe's Take:

As I've detailed previously the very thought of Petite Sirah gets me a little excited. Field Stone, one of Mike Duffy's previous career stops has made some amazing Petites over the years. Add in the fact that I consider Dry Creek Valley to be one of Petite Sirahs very best and most natural homes and you can imagine that my anticipation was building as I got ready to taste this selection from Optima.

The nose of the Petite Sirah is just stuffed with aromas that are as dark and brooding as the unlit sky at midnight; black plum, blueberry, black raspberry and black cherry each make their presence known. Taking the first sip moments after popping the cork this Petite is, not surprisingly, a bit tight. Giving it an hour or so in the decanter is sufficient to let its charms emerge. Blackberry fruit is dominant through the palate and wrapped in dark chocolate notes with fruitcake spice underpinning it all. Subtle hints of bacon fat creep in around mid-palate and continue forward. All the flavor elements carry on with vary degrees of intensity into the persistent finish which is also quite pleasingly and rather intensely dry. Fine, firm tannic structure and excellent acidity provide an tremendous framework for this Petite Sirah.

This is a classic example of Dry Creek Valley Petite Sirah. It has the structure to promise a long, prosperous, and ever evolving shelf life. I wouldn't hesitate to lay this wine down for 10-15 years. If you can wait that long you'll have a very different wine, but an equally delicious and interesting one in my estimation. If you're going to drink this over the next couple of years, please decant it so you get the most out of it. I also recommend pairing it with braised short ribs, a heavily marbled steak from your grill or something else equally substantial.