

2005 Tempranillo Starr Ranch Vineyard

Appellation: Paso Robles
pH: 3.96
Alcohol by Volume: 15%
T.A.: .51g/100mL
R.S.: .071mg/100mL
Malic Acid: .002mg/100mL

Produced and Bottled by:
Kenneth Volk Vineyards
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In the Vineyard

The Starr Ranch Vineyard is located adjacent to Chimney Rock Road in western Paso Robles. This young vineyard is planted to predominately Bordeaux and Rhone grape varieties, along with approximately five acres of Tempranillo. The Tempranillo is planted on a steep northwesterly facing hillside. The vine rows are planted vertically on the hillside and are cordon trained and spur pruned. The topsoil is coarse gravelly, silty loam overlaying fractured rock with undulating clay lens near the base of the hill.

Proprietor Judy Starr and her viticultural staff maintain this property with great pride and farm the property sustainably. The vineyard location, in the rain shadow of the Santa Lucia Mountains, received in excess of 35 inches of precipitation during the winter of 2004-2005.

Vine growth began in mid March and by the end of April shoot growth was rampant in response to the warm springtime temperatures. Bloom and set occurred under idle conditions in the last week of May. The young vines set an enormous potential crop of berries per cluster and an early shoot thinning and leaf pulling pass was made in June to open up the fruit zone to sunlight and airflow.

2005 was a warm growing season that was punctuated with several episodic heat wave spikes. These juvenile vines showed incredible vigor despite carrying a relatively large crop. Fortunately, prior to veraison, shoot growth slowed and the tendrils started to stunt as the berries began to color. The vineyard crew made another thinning pass, dropping less colored fruit and bunches that were stacked together. It also became clear there was a fair amount of difference between the top of the hill and the bottom in regards to fruit maturity and degree of ripeness. The shoot growth at the top of the hill was slowing down and grape clusters were through veraison while vines at the bottom of the slope vines still had actively growing shoot tips and the berries were only beginning to color. We decided to handle the vineyard in three separate blocks: top, middle, and bottom hillside. The vineyard was harvested on three different picking dates spread over the month of September 2005.

At the Winery

The top of the hillside fruit was the first to be hand harvested and the fruit was destemmed without crushing into 1.5 ton almond bin open top fermentors. Dry ice was layered through the bins during filling to bring the fruit temperatures to approximately 50 degrees, promoting several days of cold soaking. The bins were inoculated with Assmanshausen yeast strain and the fruit was hand punched down 2-5 times daily during its 10 day fermentation. The bins were drained prior to basket pressing and barreled directly into French and Hungarian cooperage.

The mid-slope section of the vineyard fruit was fermented in an insulated stainless steel tank and inoculated with T-73, a Rioja yeast strain. The cap was pumped over several times a day and the tank completely drained through a screen sump over mid-fermentation to turn over the tanks contents and promote seed removal. Then it was left on the skins for 23 days prior to pressing. The last lot from the block at the lower section of the vineyard was completely de-stemmed and crushed into open top almond bins and fermented with the Rhone isolate D-254. The middle and lower section lots of the vineyards were aged in a combination of American oak and French oak cooperage of Demptos, Vicard and Francois Freres. All three harvest lots were kept separate during the 20 months of aging and each lot was racked once following completion of malolactic fermentation in the spring of 2006. In preparation for bottling the barrels were racked to tank, egg white fined, and cold settled.

In the Glass

This wine displays aromas of earth and tea leaf with a pleasing background of oak and spice. Medium bodied on the palate one finds flavors of tobacco, dark red fruit and spice nestled in firm tannins. This robust wine can be enjoyed with grilled and cured meats, and rustic pasta dishes complimented by the use of hot chilies.