

2002 Syrah

Ladi's Vineyard

Sonoma County

Deerfield Ranch Winery, in the heart of Sonoma Valley at Kenwood, specializes in small lots of handmade wines from select vineyards in the California North Coast Appellation, which includes Sonoma, Napa, Lake and Mendocino Counties. Production totals around 10,000 cases of several varietals and blends. Visit www.deerfieldranch.com for more information.

The Vineyard: Ladi's Vineyard lies in the foothills east of the Santa Rosa plain. The shallow, red, volcanic soil, slope and exposure, of this 17-acre vineyard is ideally suited to Syrah. Ladi Danielik has a unique talent for growing grapes. Each vine is individually pruned, trellised and trained to its specific needs. Five-time Gold Medalist for "Vineyard of the Year" at the Sonoma County Harvest Fair Wine competition, Ladi's Vineyard is the most highly decorated in the competition's history.

The Vintage: 2002 was a superb vintage, bucking a decades-long trend of the odd years being better than the even. Several natural cycles influence the quality of a vintage. There is the 2-year growth cycle of vines, the 7-year El Niño cycle, and a 25-year oceanic cycle only recently discovered. The interplay of these cycles influences long-term fluctuations in the life of the vine and quality of its fruit. We believe that 2002 marks the beginning of a swing in the long term even/odd cycle. We expect the next several years to be quite even in quality as the even years begin to take over the odd years in comparative quality. 2002 gave us a long mild growing season, good balance in the vines and complex flavors in the fruit.

The Wine: We are enjoying learning how to make better Syrah, as I think we do every year. The trick is to capture the richness of the vine-ripened fruit without producing a jammy character. The wine should be dry but not harsh, earthy but not bitter or dirty tasting. It's all in the details, each one playing on the next. We included about 50% whole berries in the fermenters and used both native and cultured yeasts. The native yeast accentuates the terrior while the cultured yeasts keep the varietal true to form. The grapes were fermented in open-top tanks, hand-stirred and never pumped. Fermentation temperature peaked at a warm 96°F to extract maximum color, structure and glycerin, which improves mouth feel and viscosity. We added a little more American oak to the barrel mix. We clarified the wine by repeated racking, avoided fining and filtration.

Tasting Notes: The color is a deep, brilliant garnet. Glycerin ribbons of pleasing color glide down the glass. The nose evokes images of a dark berry laden cake rather than a mixture of fruit. There's chocolate, cedar and a bit of allspice. There's a hint of outdoors barbeque char wafting on a warm wind. The taste follows these cues, layering on additional notes of leather and dried roses. The overall marriage of tastes lingers in every corner of the mouth well after swallowing. There is harmony and balance. We think this is our best one yet. It will pair well with charbroiled red meats, game and wild mushrooms, or even a roast beef sandwich.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemakers:	Robert Rex & Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, October 10, 2002
Brix at Harvest:	26.2° ; Acid: 6.2g/L
pH at harvest:	3.42
Yeast:	Syrah (French origin)
Barrel aging:	17 months in 85% French, 15% American 30% new oak.
Max. Fermentation Temp:	98°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100%
Fining:	none; filtration: screen only at bottling.
SO ₂ at Bottling:	20 ppm
Bottled:	May 5, 2004
Cases bottled:	612
Alcohol:	14.8%
Released:	March 1, 2005
Awards & Reviews:	Gold Medal & nominated for best of show Hilton Head Winefest 2005

