

2002 Syrah

Columbia Valley, Washington

THE WINE

This is the second vintage of Hogue Syrah. Syrah's popularity continues to grow nationwide because of its flavor concentration and soft, forward fruit. In Washington we have identified areas within the Columbia Valley where the varietal does extremely well. The grapes are picked when the flavors are concentrated and very ripe. We've blended in Lemberger to add complexity and structure to the finished wine. Lemberger's black pepper and spice has a lot in common with Syrah and integrates well with the spice imparted by aging in American oak. On the palate are complex flavors of plum and violet, a bit of leather, well integrated oak and a slight herbalness characteristic of Syrah. Tannins are moderate.

THE VINTAGE AND VINEYARDS

A normal year in terms of heat accumulation, 2002 was characterized by unseasonably hot weather in July followed by a normal August and an exceptionally dry and temperate fall. The dry, breezy fall weather led to optimal ripening, with plenty of hang time for the development of flavors. The fruit came from the Yakima Valley (47%), Alderdale (29%), Walla Walla (13%) and Wahluke Slope (11%) growing regions. Syrah harvest began on September 28 with fruit from the Seven Hills Vineyard in the Walla Walla area. Most of the fruit was harvested between October 10 and 13. Lemberger came in last on October 20 from vineyards in the Upper Yakima Valley.

THE WINEMAKING

The wine was pressed off from the skins when the proper color and tannin extraction were achieved. This is often before the wine has reached dryness. The wine underwent malolactic fermentation. A portion of the wine was aged in seasoned oak to preserve fruit character. Some of the lots underwent micro-oxygenation to build and complete the tannin structure of the wine before blending it with the barrel fraction. After 12 months on wood the new wine spent another 4 months in the bottle before being released.

THE NUMBERS

Appellation: Columbia Valley, Washington.

Varietal Percentages: 76% Syrah, 22% Lemberger, 2% Merlot

Brix at Harvest: 25.4°

Total Acidity: 0.54 g/100 ml

pH: 3.73

Finished Alcohol: 13.4% by volume

