

## 2004 SYRAH “NOOK & CRANNY”

*Estate Grown, Santa Rita Hills*

*Winemaker's Notes:*

Syrah grown west of Highway 101 in the Santa Ynez Valley can be extraordinary. The trick is in getting it thoroughly ripe. Our vineyard is under a heavy influence from the ocean, and like the rest of the Santa Rita Hills, it's very cool and breezy through out the growing season. In fact, most of our ranch is too cool to consistently ripen Syrah. But, as luck would have it, we have a couple of small sites that do accommodate this noble Rhone varietal.

With the exception of Burgundy, the prevailing wisdom says that great vineyards in the northern hemisphere ideally face west or south, so as to insure that their vines get plenty of sun. But with Syrah we have found it necessary to plant on east facing hillsides, out of the wind, where it is actually a couple of degrees warmer throughout the day. With 95% of our vineyards facing the wrong way, we are only talking about a couple of tiny adjacent hillsides. Making it even more extraordinary is the fact that their soils are a matrix of gravelly loam and shattered sandstone, the kind of stuff that intimately governs the vigorous nature of Syrah, while still allowing it to ripen. What we have are two little viticultural sweet spots, indeed on our ranch, the NOOK & CRANNY for the growing of world class Syrah. The downside is that we can't make very much of this stuff.

The upside is that 95% of our ranch is Mecca for growing Pinot.

I think it is interesting to note that all three of the Terroir Exclusives Syrahs were made from very ripe grapes, crushed, fermented, pressed off and aged the exact same way. All three have had the same hefty dose of new French Oak, with the same toast levels, from the same cooper. In short, while the results in these wines are different, the winemaking “style” of these wines is the same.

The Radical and the Frying Pan have in common all the fundamental viticultural influences except one, their soils. The type of hard pan that has been shattered into the subsoil in the Frying Pan is an ocean influenced sandstone. The subsoil in Radical is a fractured and decomposed limestone. With all the other factors similar, one can hypothesize that a comparison of these two wines is essentially a reflection of their different soils. Ultimately, this is why I believe these two wines, side by side, are such a good study of terroir in terms of the crux of this concept; the soil.

Throwing the Nook & Cranny into the mix is also interesting, but its combination of soil and micro-climate makes any comparison of the terroir more complicated. For starters, the vines in Nook & Cranny grow in a cool climate. Also the exposure (hillside) here is east facing and is not as steep. While the winemaking “style” of Nook & Cranny is still the same as the other two wines, to say that the differences in all three wines is from their terroir, is to say that their differences stem from factors beyond simply their soils.

This year's Nook and Cranny is chalk full of its signature white pepper, spice and cassis. The Frying Pan has the smoke, the Radical has the perfume, and the Nook & Cranny has the pepper. I opened up a bottle of the Nook & Cranny to get a bearing on it for these notes. The first thing that hit me was the thought, “that's the best Syrah I have ever made.”

Then I opened up a bottle of Radical.

# Babcock

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WINERY & VINEYARDS

Technical Notes:

VARIETAL COMPOSITION: 100% Syrah VINEYARDS: Babcock Estate

FINISHED WINE: Residual Sugar: Dry, pH: 3.62 ,TA: 7.4 gm/L, Alcohol: 14.5%

TIME IN BARRELS: 14 months, 33% new French oak; BOTTLING DATE: December 2005

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 124 cases 12/750 ML; RELEASE DATE: August, 2006