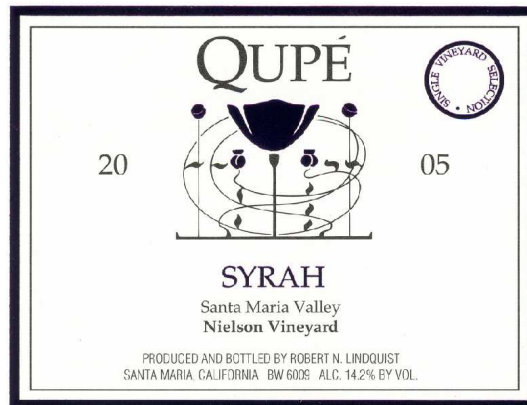


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2005, SYRAH NIELSON VINEYARD

DESCRIPTION

In the summer of 2005 I got a phone call from Jonathan Nagy, the winemaker at Byron Vineyards. Byron, which had been owned by the Robert Mondavi Corporation, had recently been sold by Mondavi to Constellation. Constellation spun off Byron and Arrowood Vineyards and sold then to the Legacy Wine Group... then Legacy went bankrupt. All of this in the span of months, right before the great 2005 Harvest.

So Jonathan calls and says "I've got to sell some grapes." I say I've got all the grapes I can handle, but Jonathan is sure I'll want some of these grapes... and he was right!

This section of the Nielson Vineyard was planted on a west facing slope in the late 1980s. Most of the grapes had been going into Byron's IO program. The grapes in 2005 were gorgeous. About 3 tons to the acre and the vines beautifully farmed. By mid September the stems had started to harden off and when we harvested on September 30th they had turned a beautiful shade of reddish brown. I left in 22% whole clusters with stems in the fermenter, my only regret is that I didn't leave more.

Traditional winemaking was used, small open top fermenter, manual punchdowns and aging for 15 months in Francois Freres Burgundy barrels (25% new). 160 cases were bottled without fining or filtration in February 2007. This is classic cool climate Santa Maria Valley syrah – though Nielson is a bit warmer than Bien Nacido. The deep color leads to heady spicy aromatics of white pepper and blueberries. This is a big wine by our standards but with a lot of elegance and breed. Aside from our top syrahs from Bien Nacido, this is my personal favorite of the 2005s.

Byron has since sold to Kendall-Jackson. We got grapes again in 2006, really good but not quite up to the 2005. Don't know if we'll see these grapes again.

FACTS

name:	2005, Syrah "Nielson Vineyard"
item number:	M20516002-01 (SB 97879-01)
composition:	100 % Syrah
alcohol:	15.0 % by volume
production:	160 cases
price:	See pricelist