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Que Syrah, Shiraz,..

The Syrah grape has a worldly history. Many experts believe that it was originally brought from Southeastern Iran, near the city of Shiraz, to the Rhone Valley of France around the time of the Roman Empire. Hence, the Australian and South African term for the grape Shiraz. Shiraz and Syrah are the same grape variety. In Australia it is also known as the Hermitage grape after the famous Le Hermitage wines of southern France. Shiraz/Syrah is a newcomer to New Mexico's vineyard landscape, but some of the similarities between the area around Shiraz, Iran and the Tularosa Basin are worth noting. The first is altitude as the ancient city of Shiraz, Iran lies at 5349 feet in elevation above sea level. Second, of course is climate as the high desert areas of Iran are very similar to the Tularosa Basin. Iran is the largest grower of pistachios in the world. Pistachios thrive in the Tularosa Basin and many attest to the fact that the taste of the local pistachios in New Mexico as being superb. Most experts believe the area in and around Iran to be the origin of all vinifera (wine grape) varieties. Australian Shiraz is a very popular product on the market with much of popular priced wine in the \$6.00 to \$8.00 range being very simple fruity and a tad sweet. We feel that the Shiraz being produced from the Basin's vineyards can compete on a world scale, mostly because of this grape varieties ability to produce meaty dark red wine and yet with fruity and easy to drink tannin profiles. In 2004 we fermented Shiraz grapes from four different vineyard sources at varying ages of vines, with distinct soils and fermented each lot with different yeast strains and each lot of wine yielded unique results. As we learn how to treat the grape in the winery and in the vineyards it is sure to produce spectacular results.



Punching down Shiraz grapes at the winery.



Picture of Syrah grape.

New Year, same resolution:

One of the hardest jobs a winemaker has is having the patience to see how a wine will mature or age over time. Red wines when they are young are cloudy (mostly yeast cells) and harsh. White wines too, are cloudy and reveal little about the wine it can become. Can become is the correct term, because the actions a winemaker does to a wine or does not do to a wine will effect the characteristics of the final product. Often times it is something as simple as splashing the wine to the air to allow flavor components to open up. The quality of the grapes is still paramount and even a great winemaker can't make a silk purse out of a sows ear. But, after a few rackings (pumping wine from barrel to tank or from tank to tank) the wine will begin to clear up and open up and after a few months of settling one can begin to get an understanding of what the wine will be. It's no secret to winemakers that some wines like Pinot Noir do not like to be handled roughly and gentle racking is usually in order. Other wines benefit from rough racking and splashing or aeration of the wine to release the bound tannins and release floral fruity notes not present before. This process has to do with the wines reaction to oxygen in the air. Often times a little patience (a.k.a. aging) can yield fantastic results. The best wines are made by winemakers who constantly taste the wines at all stages of development. The best wines are made by winemakers who listen to customers tastes and improve upon the characters already present in the grapes. The best winemakers also try year after year to make the wines better. It never ceases to amaze those of us who love wine as to how it evolves both in the barrel and or in the glass. That's why people write more poetry about wine than water. A very special thanks to you our customers for enjoying our wines over the years as we continue to pursue the best quality wines the Tularosa Basin can produce. And a very prosperous New Year to all!