

2011 SYRAH, BIEN NACIDO, "X-BLOCK" | Santa Maria Valley

*B*ien Nacido in Santa Maria Valley is a very tony neighborhood, vitaceously speaking. It's my own personal (unproven) theory that the clone of Syrah planted in the X-block (the "Estrella River" clone) may in fact be identical to "Serine", the aromatic Syrah variant of Côte Rôtie. The rub is that Serine only really expresses its unique qualities when grown on very cool sites, which, of course, very accurately describes Bien Nacido.

WINEMAKING NOTES

2011 was a cool and challenging year that nonetheless (or indeed perhaps because of the Great Coolth) yielded perhaps the most exciting Bien Nacido in recent memory. (Before the climate changed so dramatically in the Santa Maria Valley, ultra-cool vintages were quite routine.) The '11 "Block X" will age very gracefully indeed, and should reach its optimal *momento de vinous verdad* in five to seven years.

TASTING NOTES

An exceptionally cool and elegant vintage, this bottling shows off the typical smoked meat/bacon fat character that typifies Bien Nacido. In recent vintages, we've been including a more substantial percentage of whole cluster fruit in this wine, and the stem inclusion does add rather nicely to the structure of the wine and perhaps an enhanced degree of herbal spiciness. Very peppery and minty, with excellent fresh acidity (another trademark of Bien Nacido Syrah), rich dark fruit, and moderate but firm tannins. Immense savoriness (somewhat of a Bonny Doon signifier), with an exotic herbal element, that rather subjectively reminds me a bit of chimichurri. This wine calls out (bleats?) for roasted lamb.

Note Well: The wine is exceptionally locked up (closed for business) for several minutes after opening, and will benefit enormously from decanting or even just sitting a half hour in a large glass; this is a great portent of the wine's great aging potential. A most successful vintage for Bien Nacido Syrah.

INGREDIENTS

Grapes, tartaric acid, and sulfur dioxide.

In the winemaking process, the following were utilized: indigenous yeast, yeast nutrients, and French oak barrels.

At time of bottling, this product contained:
55 ppm total SO₂ and 25 ppm free SO₂



VITAL STATISTICS

Blend: 100% Syrah
Vineyard: Bien Nacido
Appellation: Santa Maria Valley
Production: 463 cases
TA: 6.2 g/L
pH: 3.58
Alcohol by Volume: 12%
Cellaring: Drinkable upon release (Feb. 2015),
5-7 years ageability
Serving Temperature: 55-58° F

REGION



VINEYARD



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