



Michael McNeill shares his Master Sommelier experience visiting pureCru.

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Jonata Jonata Duo "2005 La Tierra and La Sangre"

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Robert Parker
Jonata 2005 La Tierra de Jonata

Robert Parker
Jonata 2005 La Sangre de Jonata



Jonata 2005 La Tierra de Jonata

Overview:

Nose of fresh strawberries, ripe raspberries and savory nuances give way to elusive floral notes of lavender and violets. An earthy, dusty character also shines through in the aromatic spectrum. Flavors of tart cherry and minerals. Restrained, but still showing signs of a future lush and broad mouthfeel. Lively sangiovese acidity and mouth coating tannins round out the finish.

If you want to dig down to the roots of Sangiovese, then you're going to need a mighty big shovel. The grape predates the rise of Rome.

Sangiovese's popularity has outlasted empires – but this isn't dry history. In the 2005 La Tierra de Jonata, winemaker Matt Dees has crafted a rich and pleasant pleasure. Screaming Eagle's sister winery is bottling a long-term winner.

"Sangiovese" comes from the Latin phrase *sanguis Jovis*, which means "blood of Jove". Dig out the vinyl, put "Red, Red Wine" on a turntable, pour a glass of La Tierra de Jonata, and learn why this is a wine to outlast history. Inhale ripe red berries, vanilla, dried roses and lavender, new leather, the earthy notes of craft-roasted Brazilian coffee, tobacco, cracked pepper, and crushed herbs. In the mouth, those ripe berries are balanced with minerals, and tannins. The rich mouth feel leads to a bright tannic finish. This is a generous wine, but Dees gives it restraint, making it a fine wine to enjoy on its own or with a meal.

When it comes to food, La Tierra de Jonata is broad-minded. Try it with Spanish tapas, robust stews, rabbit, roasted chicken, any cut of steak, aged cheese (especially Parmesan), and herb-forward dishes. Sangiovese likes acid, so it's a natural match for tomatoes. For an Italian country meal, break out the 2005 La Tierra de Jonata and serve sausage with roasted fennel on pizza or pasta, or with good crusty bread.

Wine Advocate gives this wine 93 points, remarking on "Jonata's penchant for producing the finest Sangiovese in California". The Roman Empire has fallen, but Sangiovese still rules. Open the '05 La Tierra de Jonata now, or lay it down in the cellar and store it for the future. You won't be the first to make history with this grape. By Jove, that's a good wine.

Jonata 2005 La Sangre de Jonata

Overview:

Same brooding nature and impenetrable color as the 04, but with differences in the flavor profile. Displaying the characteristics of our clone 383. Grilled meats and licorice dominate the nose, with a sturdy layer of black fruits underlying. Black pepper, baking spice, soy sauce and truffles. Pure and focused nose. Massive density, depth and intensity. Mouth-filling, almost chewy, sweet blackberry. Dense and ultra-concentrated with mouthwatering acidity. A beauty and the beast-like monster of a wine, with surprising refinement on the finish.

Scholar and author Joseph Campbell said, "Follow your bliss." If you're willing to travel from one end of the planet to the other, then you'd better be very sure of what your "bliss" is. Fortunately for wine-lovers, Matt Dees is committed to a path that brings bliss to the bottle. Never mind yellow bricks – Dees' road from Kansas City through Vermont, California, and New Zealand was paved with soil, hard work, and tannins. It led him to the Santa Ynez Valley, where he became Jonata's winemaker. Don't look for fancy degrees in enology. Dees' sole degree is in soil science. That's where wine starts – in the dirt.

At Screaming Eagle's sister winery, Dees has plenty of dirt to play with. Jonata has 600 acres, eighty of which are planted with varietals including Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc, Grenache, Sangiovese, and Merlot, and Cabernet Franc. That's enough to keep a self-described soil geek turned winemaker busy. Dees brings to Jonata a unique combination of experience, instinct, intuition, good solid knowledge, and a respect for tradition balanced with youthful curiosity.

There's balance in his wines, too. The 2005 Sangre is as brooding as Heathcliff and as rich as Midas' dreams. Surf the savory notes – Tellicherry peppercorns, soy, sliced grilled steak, warm truffles, the merest touch of balsamico – complemented by dense black fruits, dark chocolate, and autumnal spices.

Syrah can dine upscale or down. It likes duck, game – and game birds – hamburgers, cassoulet, aged cheese, mushrooms, and rich pastas. Set it by the barbecue or the pepper grinder, and it will introduce you to pure joy. La Sangre de Jonata is a refined, elegant Syrah, with restraint to match its power. Decant it for a few hours, and let it open out into its promise. It'll reward you in style.