



2007 Syrah-Bien Nacido Hillside Estate

This wine is 100% syrah from the Z Block at Bien Nacido. This is a 5 acre block that was custom planted for us in 1992 on a perfect southwest facing hillside slope. Hard to believe but this is our 14th vintage of this special flagship wine, and at it's \$45 suggested retail price, a steal for the quality it provides!

2007 was a somewhat difficult year. It has gotten a lot of press for being high in quality, mostly deserved, but a bit too generalized. We had a tiny crop of syrah on Z Block in 2007, not by choice, but because of poor fruit set due to bad weather during flowering and set during early June. Cold, windy and wet weather during this period disrupts the development of the grape cluster. What we did get was pretty special though with great intensity if not perfect balance. The grapes were all destemmed because the grape to stem ratio was off, then put in to small open top fermenters. After about 5 days about 10% of the juice was drained off into new Francois Freres French oak barrels for saignée barrel fermentation. I've used this technique for this wine since the first vintage in 1994 and it has become part of the wines signature style. The balance of the wine was aged for about 20 months in French oak, with about half being new Francois Freres. 1064 six-packs were bottled in June 2009.

This wine is a baby that will need at least a few more years to really start showing off. I wouldn't rank it with the very best of our Hillside syrahs because you don't achieve optimal quality without a balanced crop. I would however put it at the next echelon because of its intensity and the inherent complexity of one of our best recent vintages.