



BARBERA SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, 2004

An old saying is that the Barbera grape impersonates the character of those Piedmontese who cultivate it – robust and yet unassuming. It is an ancient varietal, with its historical roots in Italy, particularly the Piedmont region. Barbera is also a popular winegrape in California, due to its easy-going nature and ability to adapt to different soils and climates.

The 2004 Barbera is composed of one hundred percent Barbera grapes, but from two distinctly different vineyards. Much of the complexity in our 2004 *Barbera* is due to the mix of grapes from both the colder-climate of Santa Rita Hills and the warmer locale of the Los Alamos region. Eighty percent of the fruit is from the Alisos vineyard, a vineyard nestled between the Santa Maria and Santa Ynez valleys. Although still influenced by the west-to-east orientation of the valley, the vineyard enjoys warm days and mild nights. The remaining twenty percent of the grapes are from the Zotovich Vineyard in the extremely cool Santa Rita Hills. This combination of warm and cool climate grapes results in complex layering of concentrated flavors, and a better balance than if either had either been bottled separately.

2004 was characterized by hot weather early in September, resulting in both vineyards being harvested in October. The grapes from each vineyard were fermented separately in small 1.5 ton open top fermenters, and religiously punched down by hand several times each day to control the fermentation temperature as well as to extract the dark color and spicy flavors from the skins. Upon completion of fermentation, the new wines were racked into a combination of barrels and puncheons. With a focus on producing a premium Barbera in the classic Piedmont method, the wine was aged in Slovenian oak barrels as well as French oak barrels crafted by Gamba, one of the most famous coopers in Italy. 290 cases produced.

The 2004 *Barbera* is a dark ruby red color with beautiful purple highlights. It is a dark, rich wine that eagerly displays the characteristics of the two vineyards. The cool climate of Santa Rita Hills lends the dark color and the sprightly acidity of the wine, while the warmer Alisos vineyard adds softness. The nose is inviting and fresh, forecasting concentrated fruit on the palate. Intense yet delicate blueberry, raspberry and spicy characteristics abound. At first taste, your taste buds start yearning for food – as this wine is designed to make you crave a meal. Young mission figs, black cherries, a bit of black strap molasses and tar are balanced by firm and bright acidity. This balance of dark fruit and natural acidity makes this wine an extension of the plate, enabling you to feel satisfied and happy during and at the end of a meal.

This bold wine pairs superbly with hearty food, like duck. We also love it with those hard cheeses aged in red wine – the saltiness of the cheese perfectly complements the structure and firm acids of the wine.