

THE OJAI VINEYARD

OJAI SYRAH BIEN NACIDO

Santa Barbara County

The Bien Nacido is one of the wines I most enjoy making. Never straight forwardly fruity, this wine has some of the spicy complexity that I find so compelling in the famous northern Rhone appellation of Cote Rotie. I know I am completely out of sync with much of the wine world on this one, as it seems as though ready-to-drink, hot-climate Australian shiraz fruit bombs are all the rage. But with proper patience, I think you will find this wine very rewarding. In general, these syrahs have taken some time to show their best.

Since 1995 we have been making a vineyard designated syrah from here, and, as these wines have aged in the bottle they have proved themselves to be very special indeed. For my taste, the Bien Nacidos have been my best syrahs. And, since Chris Hammell took over viticultural duties in 2001, the vines and wines have grown even better. Since the beginning, I have had the conviction that the Bien Nacido vineyard has all the elements to make an age-worthy syrah, and I have structured the wines accordingly. It is a delicate balancing act to make wine that is reasonably accessible when young yet has the stuff for aging gracefully. When we release this wine for sale it doesn't have that brash fruitiness that is so fashionable these days. This wine is plenty fruit filled, but it expresses itself in a more complex, spicy, exotic, and earthy way. Based on the 1995, 1996, and 1997, the only disappointment you might experience with the Bien Nacido is if you drink it too soon. Decanting 12 to 24 hours before tasting helps if you must drink this wine young, but you miss out on a lot of its magic if you are impatient with it.