

Daniel Gehrs Wines

WINEMAKER'S COMMENTS

2009 FIRESIDE PORT

One of the most distinguishing features of Daniel Gehrs Ports has been the exclusive use of authentic Portuguese varieties in their production. This new release of Fireside Port again follows this tradition.

Perhaps my very favorite Port grape is Touriga Nacional, which is the mainstay of this vintage. It is a shy bearing variety with very small berries giving great color, concentration and, in its youth, tannin. Consequently, it makes long lived wines worthy of cellaring.

While this is a vintage dated Port it is not the exact equivalent of a "Vintage Port" from a declared vintage in Portugal. There, in the Douro Valley, the ancestral home of Port, not every vintage is deemed worthy of vintage dating and bottling and, indeed, most vintages are blended out into non-vintage bottlings to round out deficiencies in the lesser years. The Vintage Ports; those that by consensus "make the grade" are traditionally aged for two years in wood, then bottled, where in time they invariably throw a sediment called the "crust", so that the wine needs to be decanted prior to serving. Our 2009 Fireside Port was aged for the requisite 2 years in wood, making it smooth and less tannic than a Portuguese Vintage Port, and less likely to throw a significant crust in all but the longer term. The full term wood aging also makes the wine mellower and less tannic now, so that it can be enjoyed at a younger age.

The grapes for this wine were grown in Amador County, in the foothills of the great Sierra Nevada mountain range. The climate there is warm, as in the Douro Valley, but the elevation, above the Shenandoah Valley, provides cool nights through the growing season, preserving acid, keeping the grape and wine pH fairly low and thus the color and structure dark and firm respectively. Also, the granite based soils resemble those of the Douro, imparting a clean, mineral tang to the wine.

This vintage has a beautiful, dark red color and lots of "legs" or tears coat the inside of the glass. Not overly sweet, it has a lovely perfume of wild blackberries and wild anise with hints of black currant. With lots of warm, ripe blackberry and cassis flavors, solid yet smooth grape tannins and a long, warm finish from the high quality brandy used in its production this is a California Vintage Port to enjoy now or to lay down for up to ten years. Long before then, of course, it will be gone so; if you like it as much as I do you should consider buying more soon so that you can track its aging progress for at least several years. You'll be glad you did! DRG 11/11