



Age of vines: 36 years

Appellation: Napa Valley

Sub-Appellation: Spring Mountain District

Farming: dry-farmed mountain vineyard

Varietal Content: 100% Riesling

Alcohol: 12.7%

pH: 3.04

Residual Sugar: (dry) 0.70%

Cases Produced: 420 cases

Winemakers & Winegrowers:

Charles Smith & Stuart Smith



WINEMAKER NOTES

The 2008 harvest started early, was very short and, fortunately, of excellent quality. Harvest began in late August during an intense heat spell and then, like 2007 the weather turned quite moderate and nice. Fortunately, our crop was not down as many. In fact, we believe our Riesling production bottomed out in 2007 and with the 2008 crop, the Riesling is now rebounding from the replanting. Usually we start harvest in early September with Chardonnay and then move on to Riesling. But in 2008 we not only harvested the Riesling before Chardonnay, we harvested the Riesling on August 28 and 29 – more than two weeks earlier than usual.

We are especially pleased with the 2008 Riesling. While the wine is very pale compared to most other white wines, it has just a titch more color than most of our Rieslings have at this stage. The wine has an intense, yet lovely Riesling aroma. The flavors are of fresh tropical fruits that fill the mouth and linger for a very long time. We prefer to call our Riesling “dry” even though there is about 0.7 per cent residual sugar in the wine.

Beginning with our 1983 Riesling vintage we boldly went where no other American winery would go for the next 17 years – we changed our label from Johannisberg Riesling to the true and correct name – Riesling. While White Riesling is legally correct, it is none-the-less both wrong and redundant - when was the last time you had a red Riesling? This is just one example of our commitment to this wonderful and somewhat overlooked varietal.

At Smith-Madrone our goal is to make artisanal wines which are distinctive and are an expression of both the vintage and us, as vintners, but above all else, are wines which bring pleasure to the senses. Every year our wine is made from the same vineyards, pruned by the same people in the same way, cultivated in exactly the same manner and harvested at similar levels of maturity, yet Mother Nature stamps each vintage with a unique set of flavors, senses and character. Vintage dating is a celebration of that uniqueness and diversity.

February 14, 2009, Sasha Smith's blog SpinTheBottleNY

The wine has medium intensity aromas of white flowers, honeysuckle, candied grapefruit rind, and a slight perfumed talcum powder scent. There's some zippy acidity, and just a hint of sweetness. The floral and soft mineral characteristics really come out on the palate, and there's a hint of guava, too. The wine has a **lovely, long finish** with a slightly (and pleasantly) bitter/metallic note. I'd hang on to this guy for a few years to see how it develops. A friend to spicy pork loin, lighter Asian-inflected dishes...or lovely on its own.

Fall 2009, About.Wine Riesling Recommendations by Stacy Slinkard

Riesling wines are dynamic, food-favoring wines that continue to gain fans on an international level. There is great variety and expression within this single grape varietal, adding to the interest and versatility of this noble white wine grape. The 2008 Smith-Madrone Riesling is an estate grown and bottled **tropical delight from full-flavored start to crisp, mouthwatering finish**. On the nose, you can expect the engaging, high-profile floral aromatics that have endeared Riesling fans for ages. The palate yields plenty of ripe fruit - juicy peach, D'Anjou pear along with exotic tropical nuances all showcased against an outstanding backdrop of evenly balanced acidity and low residual sugar levels. A fantastic find for trickier food pairing options, based on the levels of acidity and overall palate performance.

November 2009, Food & Wine Magazine

Pairing of the Day: Every day, we spotlight a wine that pairs beautifully with an F&W recipe: November 11, 2009, Striped Bass with Sweet Carrots and Cider Glaze. Pairing: A dry Riesling. Try the 2008 Smith-Madrone.

September 2009, Vintuba wine blog by Chris Oggenfuss

Youthful aromas of white flowers, white peaches, green apple, citrus and nectarines. The wine is off-dry and nicely balanced by the medium plus acid. Flavors are of medium intensity and of peaches, melon, green apple, lemon zest and wet stone. The finish is very pleasing and medium in length. **A very nice example of Riesling! Can this really be from Napa???**

May 27, 2004, San Francisco Chronicle, by Steve Pitcher

Brothers Stu and Charlie Smith farm grapes high up in the Spring Mountain District between 1,600 and 1,800 feet. Stu manages the vineyard and runs the business, Charlie makes the wines, and Riesling is their passion -- dry Riesling, that is. "When figuring out what to plant back in 1972, we finally decided to go with the world's four great wine varieties -- Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir, Riesling and Chardonnay," Stu Smith says. The 5.5 acres of Riesling vines were planted on east-facing slopes to catch the most sunlight and warmth, although the mountain climate is cooler than that of the valley floor. "Our very first Riesling, grown in vineyards we planted and made in our winery, was the 1977 vintage," Stu says. He now farms a bit more than 6 acres of Riesling and hopes to expand that to 10 to 11 acres. Smith-Madrone's Rieslings express stone fruits (think apricots and peaches) with subtle hints of mineral and petrol. **They age marvelously**, as a vertical tasting of six selected vintages from 1981 to 2002 demonstrated.

October 4, 2006, The New York Sun, by Peter Hellman

...one of California's most distinguished wineries.....Smith-Madrone, now in the midst of its 35th vintage high on the upper slopes of Spring Mountain high over the Napa Valley. In an era when most California wines are riper and more alcoholic than ever before, the Smith brothers make traditional wines, maybe even throwback wines. They're dry-farmed for intensity and harvested ripe, but not overly so. The result is wines which have alcohol between 12% and 13%, once a common level but now the exception in an era of wines that routinely reach 15% alcohol or higher.. **I don't believe there is any other dry California riesling that is the equal of Smith Madrone's in its improvement after 10 years and beyond.**

September 30, 2009, New York Times, Riesling Gains a U.S. Foothold, by Eric Asimov

For years sommeliers and certain wine writers shouted themselves hoarse preaching the virtues of riesling. In a white-wine world dominated by top-heavy chardonnays, saucy sauvignon blancs and vapid pinot grigios, they prescribed riesling as a wine that had everything. The riesling grape was versatile, producing wines that could be bone dry or syrupy sweet. Rieslings could be profound, delicate and sometimes both. They were rarely heavy or oaky, and they were great with food. Riesling advocates continued to preach even though nobody seemed to be listening. And then it happened. While pinot noir, abetted by the popular film "Sideways," was soaring in popularity, riesling was quietly gaining ground, too. In the last five years riesling has secured a neat little niche for itself in stores and on restaurant wine lists. Now, it seems riesling is being grown everywhere. First, it also seems worth asking just how good is American riesling? To answer that question, the wine panel recently tasted 20 bottles, restricting ourselves as best we could to dry riesling. As usual in these blind tastings, we bought our wines retail from local wine shops and through Internet merchants. **I can tell you up front that some of my favorite American rieslings, from Smith-Madrone..in Napa Valley,** were not in the lineup. Those wines are made in small quantities and rarely show up in retail shops.