

# ELYSE

After years of making wine for other people, most notably at Napa's Whitehall Lane winery, Ray Coursen, along with his wife Nancy, started his own label (named for their daughter) in 1987. For three years, they bottled only the fruit of the celebrated Morisoli Vineyard, which is quite literally in their back yard in Rutherford. This vineyard, with its outstanding Cabernet and Zinfandel, still represents the Elyse flagship.

Subsequent years brought Zinfandel from select sites in Rutherford and Howell Mountain fruit and a late, lamented "Nero Misto" (literally: "mixed black") from a parcel of old, unfashionable, unjustly neglected grape varieties in prime Rutherford terroir. Most recently, Ray has worked with quite spectacular success with Zinfandel from Amador County's Sierra Foothills and with fruit from Rhone varieties, an area which he intends to explore with increasing intensity.

While each of Ray Coursen's bottlings is distinctively rooted in its unique soil and microclimate, and most of them are varietally labeled, yet one shouldn't hesitate to call him a "master blender". That's because the wines often expertly marry fruit from several sites, and the fine tuning frequently utilizes small batches of old vines Petite Sirah, Carignane or Gamay, all of which masterfully serve Ray's fundamental aim: showcasing the fruit.

"The grape," says Ray, "has everything it needs to become wine. Wine is really what I'm getting when I get fruit. My strength really is like that of a farmer, working with the grower to get him to get me the right fruit at the right time. After the fruit gets to 21 Brix, it's my call. The grower would like to pick in July ... cause then he's done and he gets his money. We're hanging on to them and they say: „Look, these things are gonna raisin. I say: „Let ‚em go let ‚em hang and call me in a couple of days. Two days later:



„You know it's a hundred degrees out there; they're raisin' it. „Nope, I say, „they're not quite there. I can tell by taste. I chew maybe 200 grapes a day. I look at some of these wineries and they let somebody else sample. What kind of winemaker lets somebody else sample his fruit?"

The reds of Elyse, with old vines fruit and Ray's care in the cellar, have also set an enviable track record for ageability. The 1990 Nero Misto and Morisoli Zinfandel will turn heads today, indeed one shouldn't hesitate to stack them up against any other Napa red wine produced in that celebrated vintage.

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"This excellent winery continues to carve out a well-deserved reputation for its interesting red wine portfolio."

**Robert Parker,**

*The Wine Advocate* 6/94; 2/05

*Production: Around 4,000 cases; due to increase slightly in 2002.*

*Varieties: Zinfandel; Cabernet Sauvignon; Syrah; Grenache; Petite Sirah, Carignan, Napa Gamay*

*Present fruit sources: See the vineyard designations below.*

## **Zinfandel Sierra Foothills**

## **Zinfandel Rutherford**

*The wine was formerly known as "Coeur du Val". The new name specifies not just which valley, but which part of the valley.*

## **Zinfandel Howell Mountain**

## **Zinfandel Morisoli**

*One of the only great Rutherford Bench vineyards in which Zin has not all been uprooted or budded over. A classic year after year.*

## **Cabernet Sauvignon Tiejn**

*Dense blue fruit richness and weight.*

## **Cabernet Sauvignon Morisoli**

*Practically the "old home" vineyard for Ray, Morisoli consistently yields an exquisite, complex expression of Rutherford bench terroir.*

## **Cabernet Sauvignon Napa - new!**

*Bordeaux-inspired Atlas Peak blend with merlot, cabernet franc and petit verdot.*

## **"Mon Chou" - new!**

*A marriage of Atlas Peak and Rutherford, 52% cabernet franc, 23% cabernet sauvignon, 19% merlot, 6% petit verdot.*

## **Syrah Napa Valley**

*Rich and fragrant Syrah w/ 7% viognier*

## **Petite Sirah Howell Mountain**

### **"Jacob Franklin"**

*An extremely limited mountain release.*

## **Petite Sirah Rutherford**

*Sensational concentration and fascinating flavors tell why "Pet" is suddenly hot!*

## **"d'Aventure"**

*A Rhone blend of Syrah, Mourvedre. Carignan, Grenache, Cinsault, Viognier & (always!) Napa Gamay.*