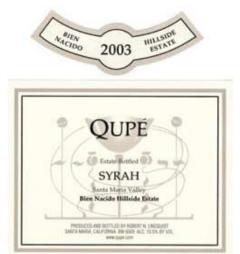![Appellation America.com logo]

WINE RECOMMENDATION

Qupe Wine Cellars

2003 Syrah, *Bien Nacido, Z Block - Hillside Estate* (Santa Maria Valley)

Most years I'm torn between buying the Bien Nacido Reserve Syrah or the Bien Nacido Hillside Estate version. Both are quite good, but each different in their own way. The fundamental difference in the Hillside Estate Syrah is that it is sourced solely from a five acre parcel, on the Bien Nacido hillside, that was specifically custom planted for Qupé in 1992.

In 2003, the grapes were picked a little riper that usual (14.4% alcohol) but the good news is that the lower acidity makes the tannins softer and more approachable now, and the lower than normal pH gives the wine a refreshing finish. In the mouth, this Syrah shows terrific intensity and purity of flavors that include, but are not limited to, blackberry, black raspberry, dark plum, vanilla, black pepper, mineral and graphite. All the elements, including the alcohol, seem to rest in perfect balance. This is the total package for those who are fans of cool climate Syrah, dripping with varietal authenticity.

Purchase this wine as part of the Bien Nacido Vineyards Collector's Case, a unique offering of 12 vineyard designated wines from 12 different winemakers.

Reviewed March 26, 2007 by Dennis Schaefer.

THE WINE

Winery: Qupe Wine Cellars
Vineyard: Bien Nacido, Z Block - Hillside Estate
Vintage: 2003
Wine: Syrah
Appellation: Santa Maria Valley
Grape: Syrah / Shiraz
Price: $45.00

THE REVIEWER

Dennis Schaefer

Dennis Schaefer has been tasting and writing about wine for over 30 years, propelled by a continuing curiosity and burgeoning enthusiasm for discovering what's in the bottle. Blessed with catholic tastes, he enjoys everything from the obvious to the sublime. A major requirement is that the vineyard, winery and winemaker consistently perform well and fulfill their potential. Balance, concentration and complexity are key to the tasting experience but, in the end, the purpose of wine is simply to give pleasure.