

2016 Petite Sirah

D. Rafanelli Vineyard, Dry Creek Valley
Rex & Amarica Blocks

Vineyard

Nestled above Doug Rafanelli's blocks of Cabernet Sauvignon in the west hills above Dry Creek Valley, two small Petite Sirah vineyards named for Doug's children lie on separate hilltops of barely an acre each. These head-trained vines cling to steep hillsides, and struggle to support only about 15-20 tiny clusters per vine—but the struggle is well worth it! The vines are warm at first light and bathe in sunshine right up until sunset, as the high hilltops avoid the shadows from Dry Creek Valley's western hills. The thin soil warms early as it barely holds enough moisture to facilitate vine nourishment; this is dry farming to an extreme.

Winemaking

The Rex and Amarica blocks of Petite Sirah were both hand-harvested on September 6 after a warm, dry summer—but yields were miniscule at barely a ton per acre! The grapes were sorted and then crushed directly to small fermenters. After four days of cold soak, the musts were inoculated with a Rhone strain. The cap was punched down three times daily through fermentation, and then pressed off immediately. The free run portion was racked to French oak for 23 months of aging, at which time 6 barrels (three new and three 2-year-old) were selected for this single vineyard bottling. The wine was bottled unfinned in September 2018.

Tasting Notes

The 2016 Rex & Amarica Petite Sirah has bright aromas of blackberry, ripe pomegranate, and black cherry, with well-integrated oak and toast. The wine is opaque, nearly like India ink, with black and deep purple hues. The velvety tannins are meshed in intense blackberry, blueberry and licorice flavors, and the well-balanced finish lingers while concentrated fruit explodes on the pallet. Alcohol 14.8%.

YIELD: 1.2 tons/acre

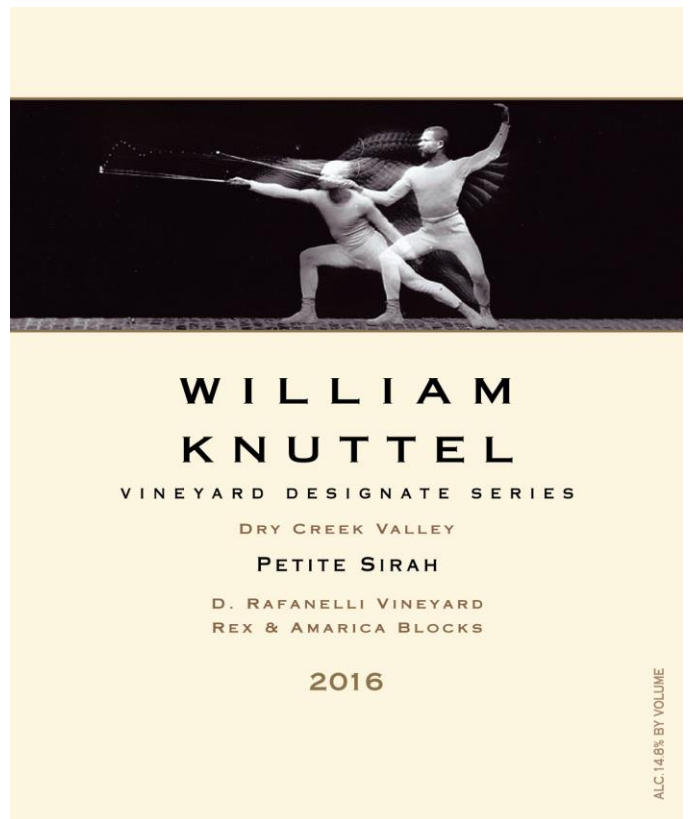
AGING: 23 months in French oak, 60% new, 40% 2 year-old

COOPERAGE: Tonnelleries O, Kadar (Taransaud)

TA/pH: 5.6 g/L & 3.77

CASES: 138 (12 x 750ml)

PRESS: 91 points from the Wine Enthusiast



William Knuttel was formerly Winemaker & Vice President with Chalk Hill Estate from 1996 to 2003, specializing in ultra-premium Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, & Sauvignon Blanc, and Dry Creek Vineyard's Executive Winemaker from 2003 to 2011. As proprietor of Tria, 1995 to 2003, he produced fine Pinot Noir and Zinfandel. As Saintsbury's winemaker from 1983 to 1996, Knuttel established that brand as a leader in ultra-premium Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

ABOUT THE LABEL ART:
Designer Jeffrey Caldewey captured William Knuttel's kinetic wine world with Etienne-Jules Marey's 1890 "chronophotograph," in which multiple exposures are superimposed to show the complete motion of "le coup d'eepe." The image metaphorically highlights the balance, finesse, power and poise valued by the wine-maker.