Evaluation of Syrah Clonal Selections in the Salinas Valley

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Seven clonal selections of Syrah were evaluated for viticultural performance for four years (2004-2007). Syrah FPS 7 (reported to be 877); ENTAV selections 174, 383, 470, and 525; 99 (Tablas Creek A); and Shiraz FPS 7 were field budded onto SO4 rootstock planted in 2001 at a vineyard site southwest of Soledad (Arroyo Seco appellation). Vines were planted at a row and vine spacing of 2.4 x 1.5 m, trained as unilateral cordons and spur pruned on a vertical shoot positioned trellis.

Significant differences have been observed in the yield response, with a range of 1.75 kg/vine from high to low yielding selections. Syrah selections separated into four groups with 99 being the highest yielding, ENTAV 383 and 525 being similar, then ENTAV 174 and FPS 7, and the lowest yielding group was ENTAV 470 and Shiraz 7. Higher cluster weights were the factor most influencing crop yield. Either more berries per cluster or greater berry weight increased cluster weight.

Pruning weights had a range of 0.57 kg/vine from high to low weights. FPS 7 and ENTAV 470 had higher pruning weight and ENTAV 525 had the lowest, the remaining selections were intermediate between the high and low groups. Yield: pruning weight ratios were higher for the more productive selections. They ranged from 3.9 (99) to 1.7 (FPS 7). The lower yielding selections tended to have higher Brix.

Tasting panels were not able to significantly separate the wines made in 2005 and 2006, in 2007 there was a preference for wine made from Syrah 7 (877).