

# FROM THE VINE

abq's monthly  
wine and spirits scene

## The Miracle of Milagro

**Rick and Mitzi Hobson**, owners of **Milagro Vineyards and Winery** (898-3998, [www.milagrovineyardsandwinery.com](http://www.milagrovineyardsandwinery.com)), have been quietly making award-winning wines in Corrales since 1988—and they have pulled in rave reviews from all over the country.

Rick is the winemaker, vineyard manager, educator, and cellar rat. Mitzi is the feisty personality making things happen in the market. Deliveries, sales calls, and wine festivals are the easy parts of her job. It's the indefinable "all other duties as they arise" that challenge her. Together they make a formidable team.

Each year Milagro produces five to seven wines, depending on availability of juice and an exceptional area of vines in a particular vineyard. Chardonnay, Corrales Red, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Zinfandel are the regular players in the Milagro lineup. Syrah (when Rick can get his hands on some good juice), and a specialty wine like the 2005 Old Church Road, Vineyard Select Zinfandel keep things hopping at this small, intense winery.

What makes these wines so interesting is the structure, balance, and depth of flavors

and aromas you get from each style. The Chardonnay (\$18) has a nice zing of acidity that tweaks the palate then smooths out on the finish due to the time spent on the lees. With a half hour breathing time and a slight chill, the flavors explode on your palate. The Corrales Red (\$14) is a great pasta, grilling, BBQ, burger, and stew match. Its rustic dryness with the earthy dark red fruit allow it to blend with the char, spices, and tomatoes found with these dishes.

Now we get into the three reds that need breathing time of at least an hour (all breathing times are in the bottle, not a decanter). Rick's Merlot (\$20) has a touch of acidity with rich tannins. The dry, earthy, musty black fruit and herbs meld nicely with marinara sauces and lean cuts of beef. His Cabernet Sauvignon (\$20) creates a nice balance of structure and flavor reaching all areas.

Sourcing grapes can be a tricky prospect and when the Syrah juice Rick had access to disappeared a few years ago, he planted new vines. The old Syrah from Milagro was made in the Old World style—meaning, the fruit is a part of the whole wine profile, peeking in and out of the earthier flavors. It will still be a

few years before we can taste the new Syrah; it'll be interesting to see what changes younger vines and different fields will contribute to the overall taste.

But you don't have to wait for a different treat from Milagro. A row of Zinfandel vines—yes, one row—produced extraordinary fruit. Taking extra care in the vineyard and then treating them differently during the winery process, Rick has produced a stellar Zinfandel. Concentrated black raspberry flavors, as well as other black fruit, enrich the overall flavor profile. Nice balance, strong backbone, good structure, and a multitude of flavors present a bold, aggressive wine now and will also help this wine age gracefully. Quantities of this special Zinfandel are limited and only available at the winery, so call Milagro to set up an appointment to get your hands on some of the Select Zinfandel, which will be released this fall. Make sure you visit the beautiful tasting room, patio, and garden while you're there. It's

a nice setting to taste some wonderful wines and get to know Rick and Mitzi.

## Sake To Me

Want a change of pace while you keep the alcohol low for your summer consumption? How about trying rice wine—otherwise known as sake.

In the past, sake was almost always served hot. Now, recent research is showing that hot sake is a way to cover up its flaws. There are clearer, purer sakes that are served chilled, which allows all the subtle flavors to shine through.

What makes these sakes more refined is the polishing of the rice. If you look at the rice used to make sake, you'll notice a cloudy density in the middle. By polishing as close as you can to this cloudiness without cracking the grain, you get the beginnings of a premium beverage.

When buying sake, look for "40–55 percent polish" in the description on the bottle. This percent indicates how much of the grain is polished away in order to get closer to that cloudy center.

Other things that lend to the flavors of sake are the water source, type of rice, and the geographical area it comes from. Sake is brewed in the same manner as beer and can be sweet or dry. It can be paired with food or simply enjoyed on its own.

Pricing of these premium sakes varies quite a bit. The Wandering Poet is available for \$16.99 (300ml) and \$34.99 (720ml). Then there's the expensive stuff like Divine Droplets, which sells for \$31.99 (300ml) and \$64.99 (720ml). It might be fun to get a group together and split the cost

of your samples. For the sake of remaining, shall we say, clear-headed, you probably shouldn't taste more than five or six at one sitting.

—By Laura Mudd

