

**Joseph Phelps Vineyards****2005 Le Mistral  
(Monterey County)**

Joseph Phelps founded his eponymous winery in the Napa Valley in 1972 and, not surprisingly, the winery is best known for Napa wines like the Bordeaux-style blend called Insignia. But Phelps, a fan of wines from France's Rhone Valley, was also a pioneer in California Syrah, producing his first one in 1974 using grapes purchased from the Christian Brothers. He planted some of his

own in the Napa Valley and, in the mid-1990s, he also planted Syrah and Grenache on two vineyard parcels on a bench south of King City in Monterey County.

Le Mistral, which sells for \$40, is modeled loosely on the red blends of the southern Rhone, although this wine is heavier on the Syrah, which accounts for 59 percent of the blend. The remainder of the blend is 23 percent Grenache, 8 percent Carignane, 5 percent Petite Sirah and 5 percent Alicante Bouschet.

I've sometimes found Le Mistral to be too overtly oaky, but the 2005 is very well balanced, with ripe yet lively black raspberry and strawberry flavors, notes of mocha and spice, and firm but approachable tannins. The wine spent 13 months in a combination of new (42 percent) and two-year-old French oak barrels. The Phelps web site, has recipes for some suggested food pairings with Le Mistral: black bean chili, Mediterranean pizza and pork chops in red wine with brown rice and pecans.

Reviewed July 18, 2007 by [Laurie Daniel](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Joseph Phelps Vineyards](#)

**Vintage:** 2005

**Wine:** Le Mistral

**Appellation:** [Monterey County](#)

**Grapes:** [Syrah / Shiraz](#) (59%), [Grenache](#) (23%), [Carignane](#) (8%), [Petite Sirah](#) (5%), [Alicante Bouschet](#) (5%)

**Price:** \$40.00

**THE REVIEWER****Laurie Daniel**

Laurie Daniel, wine columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News*, has been reviewing wine for more than 10 years. She doesn't use numbers, preferring to describe her recommended wines and let consumers decide for themselves.

Laurie believes that bigger isn't necessarily better; she's partial to wines of balance, finesse and character. Her particular interests are Pinot Noir (versions that really taste like Pinot, that is) and aromatic whites like Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Gewürztraminer.