

**Meramec Vineyards****2003 Norton
(Missouri)**

In Charles Dicken's excellent novel *Great Expectations*, Pip, the orphaned main character, relates that his sister, known as Mrs. Joe Gargery, raised Pip "by hand." He muses, "Having at that time to find out for myself what the expression meant, and knowing her to have a hard and heavy hand, and to be much in the habit of laying it upon her husband as well as upon me, I supposed that Joe Gargery and I were both brought up by hand." Fortunately, Pip had the gumption to flourish despite such a harsh upbringing.

The Norton vines tended by Meramec Vineyards' owner Phyllis Meagher were raised "by hand," but in a manner contrary to Mrs. Joe Gargery's. As we enjoyed a glass of her Norton, Phyllis coined a new term when she described her 2003 Norton to me: "*Totally Estate*." "I planted the vine, and everything was done right here," she said. Everything seems to have been done right, because her Norton is quite nice.

Phyllis not only managed to avoid excessive pyrazines (compounds that bring out vegetal or herbaceous characters in wine), but she did so without storage in oak. These unwelcome compounds are usually the result of improper cultural practices (letting the vines overproduce or over-pruning). Vanilla and leather tones from oak storage ameliorate some pyrazine expression in Norton. Most all Nortons are stored for some time in oak. Hers was aged in the bottle.

This is a good one for the anti-oak crowd. It has complex cherry-based tones and finishes with subtle acidity. Raised by the hard and heavy hand of Mrs. Joe Gargery (or probably anyone else), those Norton vines would not have flourished to produce this nice, "totally estate" Norton.

Reviewed March 28, 2008 by [Tim Pingelton](#).

THE WINE

Winery: Meramec Vineyards

Vintage: 2003

Wine: Norton

Appellation: Missouri

Grape: Norton / Cynthiana

Price: \$23.95

THE REVIEWER**Tim Pingelton**

As a professional winemaker and writer, Tim Pingelton understands how growing conditions and vinification techniques affect the grapes as they become wine. As an Appellation America correspondent, he realizes that a balance must be struck between

standards in flux and standards fixed in time. Tim continually explores the areas about which he writes to personally relate how their wines do or do not embody appellation-specific characteristics.