

**Michael Martella Wines****2004 Syrah, Camel Hill Vineyard  
(Santa Cruz Mountains)**

Call me completely camel-impaired. For years now, I've gone right past the ivory covered wire-framed camel that stands at the gates of this little vineyard on Bear Creek Road that is known as Camel Hill. When things happen right in your back yard under your own nose, you tend not to notice them until they turn up in the local newspaper. Sheesh! ...*Johnny has been making meth down there around the corner? I thought his father was with the Sheriffs Department. ...My word, the neighbor who is hogging all the wireless bandwidth really is sending porn to Sweden?* Yep, so you can live in the city and never know what your neighbors are doing under their awnings or in their garages.

The same can be said for in the country. So here is Camel Hill Vineyards, not only a camel farm, but also home to John Anderson's hillside vineyards, which are planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, as well as Syrah. Sales & Marketing Director for Michael Martella Wines, Alecia Balzeil, tells me they routinely use camel dung to fertilize the vineyards. Perhaps that adds to the distinctive gamey flavor of this very Rhoney wine that spent 17 months in French oak. The color is as huge as the nose, which is redolent of smokey meats, bacon, kalamata olives and earth. The flavors of dark fruits are layered with peppery ham and bacon, as well as Aussie licorice. This is a big, serious, broad-shouldered wine that could carry off the most Mediterranean of lamb dishes without blinking an eye. Definitely a Bactrian: the camel with two humps.

(Alc: 14.6 %, Price: \$55)

Reviewed June 11, 2007 by [Laura Ness](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Michael Martella Wines](#)  
**Vineyard:** Camel Hill Vineyard  
**Vintage:** 2004  
**Wine:** Syrah  
**Appellation:** [Santa Cruz Mountains](#)  
**Grape:** [Syrah / Shiraz](#)  
**Price:** \$55.00

**THE REVIEWER****Laura Ness**

A wine writer and wine judge for major publications and competitions around the country, Laura Ness likens wine to the experience of music. She is always looking for that ubiquitous marriage of rhythm, melody, and flawless execution. What is good music? You know it when you get lost in it. What is good wine? It is music in your mouth.