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KERRY DAMSKEY LAUNCHES PALMERI WINES
Releases 2002 Stagecoach Napa Valley Syrah

GEYSERVILLE, CA, February 23, 2005 — Kerry Damskey, internationally respected winemaker and co-owner of PALMERI, has announced the launch of PALMERI wines and the release of his 2002 Stagecoach Vineyard Napa Valley Syrah. “PALMERI is a focused hillside Syrah project,” said Damskey who has 25 years of winegrowing experience and owns a consulting firm known as Terroirs. A self-described “mountain guy” and lover of Syrah, he is driven by the alchemy of great wines and a lifelong pursuit to capture the essence of hillside grapes through the artistry of winemaking. “The PALMERI Stagecoach Vineyard Syrah is a lush, showy wine with a sensual New World boldness,” he explained. “The steep, windy slopes of the vineyard have limiting soil, yielding intense, powerful fruit with deep color.”

The wine has dark black cherry hues with a youthful purple rim, revealing lively aromas of scented blue and blackberry fruits. A classic mountain Syrah, it shows bright fruit, balanced acidity, cocoa and toast. In the tradition of wines made from true mountain grapes, initial restraint generously opens in the glass over a lingering meal. It will age gracefully for many years.

The Stagecoach Vineyard is a sweeping panoramic highland paralleling the old stagecoach route along the Vaca ridge on the eastern edge of the Napa Valley north of Atlas Peak. The mountain grapes are grown between 900 – 1,700 feet elevations on southwest-facing vineyards carved out of rocky, rust-colored volcanic earth. The ancient geologic formation of the property has resulted in older, less vigorous soils. “The land found us,” said Damskey about the original decision in 1999 to work with Jan Krupp who owns the 500-acre vineyard. “We chose the specific vineyard blocks (totaling 10 acres), the rootstock and defined the clones,” he continued. “The opportunity to plant on this site inspired our decision to establish PALMERI wines. Each of our wines is the result of a vineyard site that is well suited to express the classic sensory characteristics of the varietal.”

Originally an area of dense scrub oak laced with huge rocks and boulders, the Stagecoach Vineyard location also speaks to the brand name. PALMERI comes from *Quercus palmeri*, a small, scrappy oak that grows in the mountain ranges where Damskey selects his luxury ultra-premium grape growing land. The label for PALMERI features a wild and whimsical boar, an inhabitant of the steep hillsides, holding a *Quercus palmeri* leaf in his mouth. The rich, terra cotta hues of the label highlight the charming earthiness of this endeavor.

In terms of winemaking style, Damskey is a big advocate of small, 4- or 5-ton lots made in exclusively open-top fermentation tanks and punched down by hand. All the PALMERI wines are made in squat, round tanks without tops, allowing the punch down that develops very broad palate mouth feel in the finished wines. “It is a very gentle method of maceration for the first half of the fermentation, punching down three times a day,” he explained. He allows the must to cold soak for three days, before inoculating with a Rhone yeast culture that specifically accentuates mouth feel. “I’m big on mouth feel,” exclaimed Damskey. “I punch down extensively until the alcohol reaches 8 or 10 percent, and then I start to minimize them. Alcohol is a solvent and not only extracts color and flavor, but also tannin.”

He is not a believer in extended macerations with Syrah, and usually gently presses within three days after the wine has reached dryness. The PALMERI wines are made predominantly with the free run, as most of the pressed fractions are discarded. The wines are aged 17 or 18 months in approximately 50 percent new French barrels and 50 percent in barrels that have been used once or twice. The wine is raked three times in its life before bottling. “Air is important, more important in the beginning because it helps polymerize and set the color” specified Damskey.

PALMERI is a partnership between Kerry Damskey, his wife, Daisy, and their long-time friend, Denise Prentice. In addition to his roles at PALMERI and his consulting firm, Damskey is a founding partner in Sula Vineyards in Mumbai, India and winemaker at Dutcher Crossing, a new winery in Dry Creek Valley.

Daisy Damskey is responsible for marketing, public relations and sales, while Prentice acts as administrator and manages sales within California. They are very aligned because of basic similarities. Both share the experience of childhoods shaped by a love for entertaining, a passion for agriculture, and the belief that service to the community should remain at the heart of their actions. “The making of PALMERI has been a wonderful, creative process, said Daisy Damskey. “It is a very authentic and true experience to put your dreams and desires into a wine, from the selection of the site to the final creation. We believe that our wines, like the hillside oak for which they are named, are a part of the California tradition of lasting beauty — a pleasure to savor and preserve.”

In addition to the 200 cases of 2002 Stagecoach Vineyard Napa Valley Syrah, PALMERI will be releasing in the fall of 2005 a limited amount of 2003 Van Ness Vineyard Sonoma County Syrah and a Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah proprietary blend. Shipped nationally, the 2002 Stagecoach Syrah is also available to reciprocity states directly through the website at www.palmeriwines.com.

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