



Huber Cellars

**2006 Estate Dornfelder
Sta. Rita Hills**

When friends from their native Germany visited Norman and Traudl Huber at their young vineyard home, they were impressed with the quality of the vines and the precise planting of the vineyard. The cool climate was reminiscent of the vineyards back in Germany and upon their return they decided that the Hubers needed a bit of “the old country” in their new world vineyard. They sent over four Dornfelder vines as a gift – a grape that was bred to produce an early ripening, climate hardy red wine. A few vines didn’t make it, but the surviving ones thrived and produced big, dark and loose clusters of delicious grapes. Over the years, Dornfelder has been grafted and now comprises its own block of vines – enough to produce the unique and intriguing Huber Dornfelder wines. The comparison to Germany’s Dornfelder vines and wines stops at the entrance to the Huber estate vineyard, though. Here, rather than an early ripening grape that produces soft wines, the Dornfelder is the last block to be harvested. The wines are big and bold, full of dark fruit and earthy notes, and wines that benefit with cellaring. The best of both worlds in the glass!

Little rain throughout 2006 and a temperate and cool summer with few spikes or lows resulted in an extended growing season and almost leisurely harvest. The longer time on the vine, the reduced yields and the more petite berries produced a wine that is reflective of vintage, vineyard and varietal. The grapes were de-stemmed into open top fermenters and punched down gently twice each day during the early days of fermentation. Racked off the skins in order to keep the tannic structure of the wine under control, the young wine was racked to French oak barrels (20% of which were new oak) after the completion of primary fermentation in tank. The wine completed malo-lactic fermentation in barrel and aged for 11 months prior to a light filtration and bottling in August of 2007. Twenty months of bottle aging in perfect cellar conditions allowed the tannins to soften and the wine to integrate.

The first impression is the astounding dark, inky color of the wine – its signature trait! Almost black, the dark indigo wine sports reddish-purple edges. A swirl produces glycerin-like “legs” as the wine cascades its deep color down the sides of the glass and unleashes a perfumed nose of violets mingling with sweet tobacco leaf, camphor and rich earth. The velvety texture glides the wine across the palate with framboise, pepper spice and red plum skin mingling with blueberry and dried fig, along with a hit of black strap molasses at the finish. Beautiful, bright acidity and superb balance make this a wine that will pair beautifully with grilled meats and rich, ripe soft cheeses. Will continue to improve with 3-5 years of additional cellaring. Guten Appetit and Enjoy!

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