

WINE NEWS

feature story

California's Best of 2006

By Steve Pitcher

Rhône Blends of the Year

Ampelos, 2004 Gamma, Sta. Rita Hills - \$32: Forward, very fragrant, appealing scents of freshly crushed wild blackberry, shy mocha and a framboise high note. Luscious and velvety-smooth with firm, supple tannins and nicely concentrated, extracted blackberry fruit; fine length and balance with a minerally undertone emerging in the finish. An elegant, yet generous Syrah. (98 cases)

Jaffurs, 2004 Ampelos Vineyard, Santa Barbara County - \$42: Forward, wildly fragrant nose of white pepper, violets, smoked meat and just-picked, freshly crushed blackberry and black raspberry accented by anise seed and glove leather. Smooth, round and fleshy with deep, generous flavors, this exciting Syrah is bursting with dark berry fruit laced with vibrant white pepper spice; wonderfully complex with a long finish. This could be the Syrah of the Year if only there were more of it. (74 cases)

excerpt from Wine News. Based in San Francisco, Contributing Editor Steve Pitcher has authored this comprehensive, year-end report since 1997. He can be reached via e-mail at wine2words@aol.com. The full article can be found at <http://www.thewinenews.com/current/feat.asp>