

## NE CEDE MALIS & THE DNA OF FIELD BLEND PETITE SYRAH

YOU KNOW, I almost had that block ripped out when I arrived—one of the first things I recommended. Robert Brittan is sitting on a bench overlooking the estate vineyards, a spot where he can stretch out his long legs and think back over fourteen years of winemaking at Stags' Leap. Something got in the way of this most practical and exemplary urge. He made Petite Syrah his first season, using grapes from that 70-year-old block of mixed vines, and the wine was so good, he went back and stood in front of those vines and wanted to understand them. This curiosity led to the DNA quest and the making of Ne Cede Malis (pronounced *Nay Kayday Mahlees*, *Never give in to misfortune*, the estate motto circa 1890).

Brittan brought in Dr. Carole Meredith, geneticist from the Department of Viticulture and Enology at U.C. Davis. He was able to show her Petite Syrah vines that looked similar but made wines that tasted entirely different from each other. He will be donating samples of these selections to the repository at Davis; Meredith determined through DNA fingerprinting that they are different varieties at a genetic level.

Brittan bought the testing equipment himself, brought in a young technician with a degree in genetics, arranged for her training in the DNA analysis procedure, and began to sort through the vineyards, making wine from different blocks, evaluating, building successive blends of Petite Syrah as he replanted the estate from select genetic material.

The 1993 reserve Petite Syrah was a first effort at pulling together the results of the genetic quest, with first official bottlings under the Ne Cede Malis label in 1997, and the 1998 due out this spring. When the barrels for this wine are being racked, you can back out of the old cellar and all the way over to the Manor House and still smell it, the aromas are so intense.



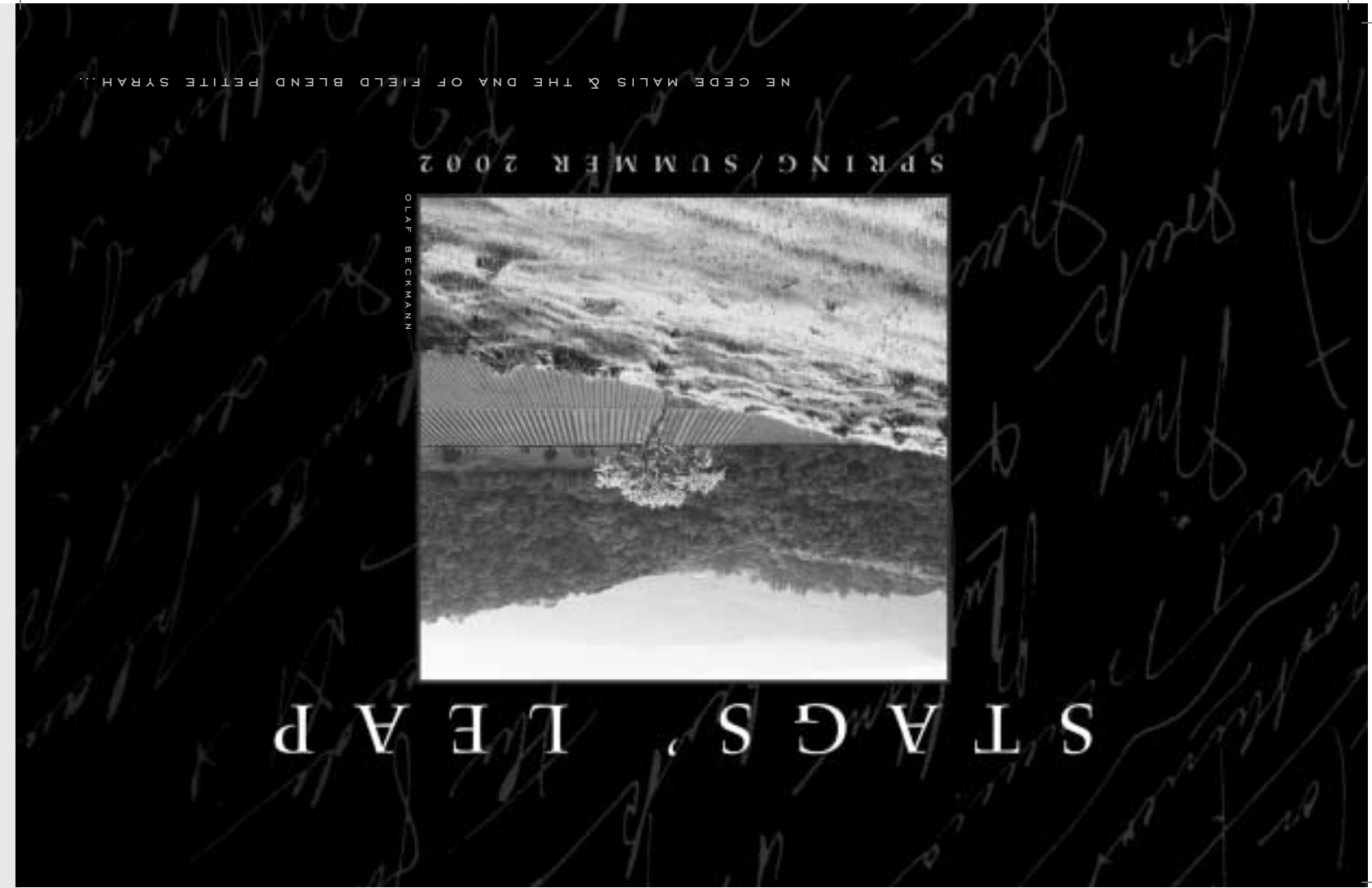
MANOR HOUSE, GRANGE ERA, 1913-1956



OLAF BECKMANN


*Ne Cede Malis lead to the genetic quest, and the genetic quest lead to the making of Ne Cede Malis... a wine that defines our 70-year-old Petite Syrah Block.*

NOTE: edited excerpt; read the complete version of newsletter articles at [stagsleap.com/art/literature.html](http://stagsleap.com/art/literature.html)



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