

# T O R

## ROCK Syrah Carneros, 2004

### Vineyard

These grapes are from a single vineyard, Las Madras, in the Carneros region near San Francisco Bay. Because it is so close to the Bay, the cool climate I feel benefits Syrah. This varietal needs a location that encourages a long “hang time” - allowing flavors to come in sync with sugars- optimizing flavor development.

Our 2004 vintage comes from two blocks, each planted to a different French clone. The rolling hillside block is Clone 174 and the lower sloping block is Clone 300. Both are considered to be “stars” in many of the top Syrah sites in California. The soils are HcP, haire, clay loam with sandy strata. The combination of soils and climate provide a good balance of vigor for Syrah.

### Vintage

If 2004 is remembered for one defining characteristic, it would be the heat spell mid-September. Most vineyards in warmer areas were ready to pick, those in cooler areas were close. Three factors saved the harvest and in many cases made an excellent vintage: The right crop load, patience and the correct amount of drip irrigation, preventing too much dehydration. If all three were not in place, growers picked before flavor maturity matched sugars. Holding on through the heat into the cooling trend allowed the flavors to catch up and gave us wonderful flavors, verve, and personality.

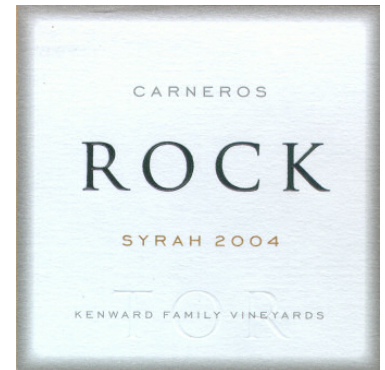
### Winemaking

Our first and primary decision is to partner with vineyards that promote small crops, great color, and fruit extraction. As with all our wines, we pick first light and the grapes are at the winery early to mid morning. Syrah is a lot of work. It requires grape sorting to remove excess dehydrated grapes and an experienced winemaker to determine stem retention percentages. Each specific vineyard and vintage dictates what percentage of clusters we choose to ferment with stems. Given that we have only one vintage or crush a year, we try two or three combinations from zero to 100% whole cluster and bottle only our favorite.

After fermentation, the wine is pressed direct to small French Burgundy barrels. I’m not at the point where I think 100% new barrels make the best wine. This wine was aged 21 months in small French oak barrels before bottling. Primary and secondary fermentations are both “wild”, or completed using what micro-flora is naturally promoted on each vineyard site.

### The Wine

This wine is very different than our Napa Valley 2004 Mt.Veeder bottling: same winemakers with slightly different techniques. However, the vineyards make most of the difference. I think of my favorite southern Rhone bottlings when I taste this wine - tasted blind, I might guess a touch of Mourvedre, maybe Cinsault in the wine. This 100% Syrah has several layers of province herb, bacon fat, dark fruits, minerals, and more. Its much more approachable now compared to our 2004 Napa Valley. Exotic.



*"Bright ruby-red.  
Idiosyncratic aromas of  
smoked meat and black olive  
tapenade; the Old World.  
Then sweet and fine-grained  
in the mouth, with lovely  
herbal and olive lift to the  
red berry flavors, not to  
mention a firm edge of  
acidity."  
Rating 89-91  
Stephen Tanzer's  
International Wine Cellar  
May/June 2006*