

T O R

TOR Cabernet Sauvignon Mast Vineyard, 2004

Vineyard

This vineyard was first planted in 1972 by the Mast family on their estate in the Napa Valley. It is south of the Dominus vineyard in the Yountville appellation and has a western hill sloped facing. The soils, like many of the better vineyards with such a facing, have much rock and are well drained. It is planted to Clone 337. We like our specific block which is in the rockiest section. Curiously I have tracked this vineyard now for two decades and noticed it has a unique micro-climate very late in the growing season. When all of its neighboring western facing benched vineyards find shade as the sun drops lower on the horizon, Mast finds a gap in the western hill and holds light and heat longer. Maybe one of the reasons the wines from our block made it two years in a row as a TOR vineyard designate.

Vintage

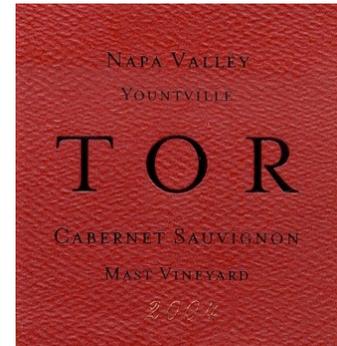
Small crop. Dry, early spring, even growing season, and then September heat spikes. The latter produced challenges for all of us, but patience, experience, instincts, I feel produced superb wines. Some great. Yes, they are concentrated, but not like 2001 and 2002 – different, rounder than 2003 – fleshy and sexy...not Ruenesk, more stealth. Streamlined. We waited several weeks after the heat blast in September, and actually watched the sugars spike, then drop and hold. During this drop and hold, the flavors of the grapes started to come together, round out, and mature, with the seeds and stems. The latter were brown and mature when we harvested the grapes on November 1.

Winemaking

What do they say about real estate? Location, location, location, and it is true when it comes to great wines. They come from very special pieces of expensive land. When discussing winemaking my mantra echoes – minimal, minimal, minimal. In other words stay out of the way of the wine when you have extraordinary grapes. We crush early morning so the grapes are still cool. We let them sit on the stems for several days till the natural yeast starts fermentation. We monitor temperatures to maximize extraction, then rack into the best French oak barrels we can buy. Then we leave the wine alone. Our favorite French coopers for Mast are Taransaud, Quintessance, and Bel Air. Minimal, Minimal, Minimal.

The Wine

This is our best Mast Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon to date, and I think better than the 2005, but time will tell. Like last year the wine exhibits much red berry character, but it is richer, bigger, and rounder. Like our 2001 Clone 4 Rutherford, it is a wine to immediately love. I like Parker's descriptors..."Margeaux-like floral note intermixed with black cherry, black current, spicy oak... The wine has outstanding length and richness, and is impressively endowed, but richly fruity and accessible enough to drink now and over the next 12-15 years." My advise on this wine would be to open a bottle over the next few months, then not try one for another 6 months or more. Reason – it will continue to round out and be a very compelling wine. Bottled July 3rd, 2006, 250 Cases



"There is something about the elegance in the Cabernets from the Stags Leap and Yountville areas, and the 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Mast Vineyard exhibits that almost Margaux-like floral note intermixed with black cherry, black currant, spicy oak, and good bay leaf and spice notes. The wine has outstanding length and richness, and is impressively endowed, but richly fruity and accessible enough to drink now and over the next 12-15 years."

Rating 92-94

**By Robert M. Parker, Jr.
The Wine Advocate**