

T O R

ROCK Syrah **Las Madres Vineyard, 2005**

Vineyard

These grapes are from a single vineyard, Las Madras, in the Carneros region near San Francisco Bay. Syrah, I feel, needs a cool growing site that encourages long “hang time” allowing flavors to come in sync with sugars, optimizing flavor development.

Our 2005 vintage comes from two cool climate 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

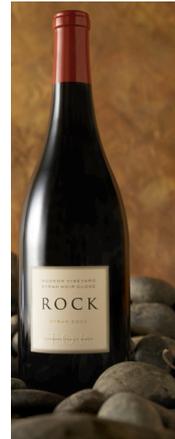
A warm spring lead to an early bud break, followed by a cool stretch bringing the vines back to a normal time-line for harvest. Syrah set was smaller than Cabernet Sauvignon and needed little thinning. In September, a ten day warm spell accelerated sugars and flavors - followed by four more weeks of “hang time” that brought flavors and sugars into harmony.

Winemaking

Great Syrah for us is the most labor intensive wine we make, the fruit has to be hand sorted to remove dehydrated berries. Most are 100% whole clustered fermentations, this means we ferment with stems intact clusters of grapes, which requires very labor intensive small lot fermentations. Sometimes we ferment with varying percentages of stems intact, the decision based on the maturity of stems and seeds. If the seeds are sweet and the stems brown, is it always closer to whole cluster, back breaking fermentations. After fermentation, the wine is pressed direct to small French Burgundy barrels. Our Syrahs are then aged with little racking for 21 months before bottling, unfiltered and unfined.

The Wine

This vineyard has a distinct perfume that is very similar to a great Crozes-Hermitage. The aromas are “garrigue” a mélange of southern French herbs, bacon fat, and hard wood smoke. On the palate the wine is fat, rich, and palate coating. This is one of our best Syrahs to date.



“Deep ruby-red. Wild aromas of smoked meat, tapenade and menthol; less oaky than the '04. Silky in texture but powerful in the middle, with captivating flavors of spices, herbs and pepper. Firm, ripe acids frame and extend the flavors, and the tannins are very suave.”

Rating 90-91

By Stephen Tanzers
“International Wine Cellar”