

T O R

TOR Cabernet Sauvignon Mast Vineyard, 2008

Blend: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon
Production: 210 cases
Release Date: January 2011

Vintage

This is a great vintage with sadly, very little wine. Winegrowers across Napa Valley harvested fruit with incredible concentration, marking it as a low-yielding, yet highquality vintage from Napa Valley. Mother Nature may have lightened the load in the vineyard, but what the winery revealed were very well structured, concentrated, elegant wines. The New Year began with intense storms that brought high winds and heavy rains to the region, but the precipitation soon waned and for the second year in a row, Napa received little more than 60% of its normal rainfall. The spring season was one of the driest on record with virtually no rain. The drier soils prompted vines to push out early, providing the "perfect storm" for frigid, dry air to create conditions for the deepest and longest frost period in decades. Extreme temperatures in the spring resulted in a bloom and set with a very small crop to start off the growing season. Daytime during the spring were picture-perfect, yet the cold night temperatures and threat of frost persisted for more than three weeks. Temperatures for the remainder of the growing season were nearly ideal, allowing the small crop to languish on the vine with optimal hang time. Diligent viticultural practices rewarded growers with dark, concentrated, balanced wine.

Vineyard

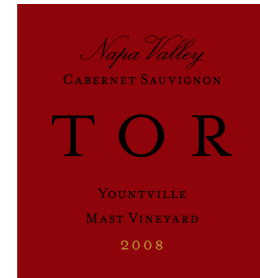
This vineyard was first planted in 1972 by the Mast family on their estate in the Napa Valley. It is south of the Dominus vineyard in the Yountville appellation and has sloped, hills on the west side of the valley. The soil has a lot of rock and is well drained. It is planted to Clone 337, and fortunately our specific block is in the rockiest section. Curiously, I have tracked this vineyard for two decades, noticing a unique micro- climate which develops late in the growing season. When all of the 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. Unique terroir.

Winemaking

During the long growing season of 2008, we thinned all Cabernet blocks several times to bring crop into balance with the vine growth. This extra labor paid off with uniformly ripe grapes at harvest. All the Cabernets had excellent uniformity in grape quality; seeds almost tasting like walnuts, no greenness. After morning crushing, the must was presoaked till the indigenous yeast began to slowly metabolize grape sugar, signaling a beginning of fermentation. For the Mast, soaks and fermentation lasted 20 days; the juice was then racked off directly into small Taransaud and Darnajou French oak barrels. After 22 months in oak, the wine went to bottle unfiltered, unfinned; that is with minimal handling or intervention.

Winemaker's Tasting Notes

On the nose you first get a touch of smoked meats which is followed by big rich black cherry/cedar/spices and licorice. On the palate this wine has tremendous density while still remaining lite on its feet. There is black raspberry/cassis/chocolate and a lingering hint of cherry wood smoke. Of the '08 Tor Cabernets this might be the one to try first (as it is almost every year). Though it will certainly benefit from several years in the cellar you will be doing yourself no disservice by trying one now.



"Ripe, Fleshy and fullbodied, with generous plum, wild berry and blackberry fruit that's supple and layered, unfolding in a gracious, graceful, complex manner, with wonderful persistence. The more you taste this, the more interesting it gets. Drink now through 2022. 210 cases made."

94 points
James Laube
Wine Spectator Insider
May 31, 2011