

T O R

TOR Noble Rot 2006

75% Sauvignon Blanc, Gamble Ranch, Yountville, Napa Valley
25% Semillon, Knights Valley Vineyard, Knights Valley

Harvest Sugar averaged 36.1 Brix
Residual Sugar 12.3 Brix

Only 20 cases made in 500ml hand-etched bottles

The story of Noble Rot

First off you have to ask—why, why and why? This is arguably the hardest wine in the world to make, also possibly the most labor intensive and expensive to make. It is a gamble from the beginning to the end—requiring perfect weather conditions to make this very “Noble Rot” to happen in the vineyard, and experienced winemaking in the end.

My answer to the “whys” — taste the wine. Our Noble Rot is made on the model of Chateau d’Yquem. These are unbelievable sweet unctuous wines that push all the buttons on anyone’s palate, and we are brazen enough to say our Noble Rot can share that d’Yquem stage in every way. It is made in the vineyard. The varietals are Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc, all hand-picked, barrel-fermented, aged in small *barrique*. We were only able to make 20 cases in 2006.

So what is “Noble Rot”? It is the perfect attack on wine grapes by the benevolent “botrytis cinerea.” If the weather is not perfect, this botrytis turns less than perfect, and is impossible to harvest the grapes. It is not uncommon for a whole year’s crop to be left hanging—if the weather does not encourage good botrytis. If perfect, the grapes have to be picked by hand, often grape by grape to reach the high levels of sugar—for us in 2006, 36.1 Brix. Picking in late November, early December is the norm.

Botrytis spores are in many vineyards as part of the micro flora, always present, but can prey on ripe grapes when the weather turns humid and warm near harvest. Grapes in a cluster then can be punctured by hundreds of botrytis spores, which can lead to severe water loss, dehydration, and sugar concentration. Acids along with sugars are metabolized, glycerol magnified, flavors intensified in combinations not possible without botrytis. In the end the cluster look like soft raisin covered with a brown fuzzy blanket—requiring the vintner to often pick berry by berry to select the right grapes. Curiously, the spores need to be checked by cooler weather (wind is good) in the final days. Again, everything has to be right for the magic to happen, and this is magic in the bottle.

Noble Rot—French translation “*pourriture noble*” —ROT is TOR spelled backwards, or read in a mirror, or through a beautiful bottle of luscious sweet nectar.



“Pale yellow. High-toned aromas of pineapple and wild herbs. Almost shockingly fresh and light on its feet, with intensely spicy flavors of pineapple, baked pear and herbs. This boasts compelling purity of fruit for a botrytis wine, and is most noteworthy for its sneaky subtlety of flavor rather than for thickness, sweetness or power. Really resounds on the back end. There’s just one new *barrique* of this juice.”

Rated 93 by
Stephen Tanzer
“*International Wine Cellar*”

“...Dolce and Tor, mimic the great Sauternes of Bordeaux... Stunning, with distinctive aromatics of spicy fresh tobacco leaf and musky smoke, followed by honey, marmalade, nectarine and ripe fig flavors that are rich and lush, but with a lively acidity to keep the flavors fresh and the finish refreshing.”

Rated 92 by
MaryAnn Worobiec
“*Wine Spectator*”