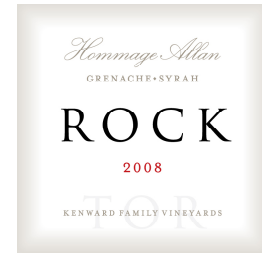


T O R

TOR ROCK Grenache/Syrah Hommage Allan, 2008

Blend: 52% Grenache from Judge Family Vineyard, Bennett Valley
48% Syrah from Hudson Vineyard, Napa Carneros
Production: 150 cases
Release Date: July 2010



Vintage

I've been through 33 vintages and can't remember one like 2008. All the rain came in what seemed like a few days early in the year. By late March we were at 60% normal, and never moved beyond, marking two years of drought conditions. Spring was wild—more frost days than I can remember. The frosty bud break, then a wet off-and-on bloom and set gave us a very small crop to work with the rest of the year. Due to the uneven set we had to go into the vineyard several times to work on cluster uniformity. At the end, thanks to a glorious Indian summer I brought in what I considered the some of the most concentrated, flavorful grapes yet for our wines. When the last grape came in we were 44% off normal crop size—but the quality factor is extremely high.

Vineyard

All our wines are single vineyard driven, so it takes a very special marriage for us to put two vineyards together. This is one of those occasions. For these two Rhone varietals I have chosen cool sites. Case in point, the Grenache from Judge Vineyard were the last grapes to be picked in 08, coming in after all the Cabernets—October 24th. They needed to hang forever I felt to build real varietal flavor and character. During the growing season we thinned the crop four times—sharply reducing yield. The Syrah is from a block in Lee Hudson's vineyard that has given us extraordinary wines for four years. It has a real Northern Rhône/Syrah nose, with the thickness and body of a great California wine. We also thinned this block numerous times in 08, and picked the first week in October.

Winemaking

No formulas here. Each year the condition of the grapes and stems tell us how we should make the wine. In 2008 both picks were early morning. The stems were lignified (brown as opposed to green), and that allowed us to use partial whole clusters (stems intact) in both wild yeast fermentations. To maximize color and extracts, the temperatures of the fermentations are closely monitored. Once racked into small French burgundy barrels, the wines receive minimal handling, and racking until they are bottled. The Grenache always starts off light in color then picks up weight and color in barrel. The Syrah begins black and stays black. The 52%/48% of the two was magic for 2008.

Winemaker's Tasting Notes

The aromatics on this just explode with earth/spice/dried herbs and roasted meats. On the palate this shows a forward sweetness on the entry along with more roasted meats/spices/sweet fruit wood smoke and a tailing earthy quality. The combination of Hudson Syrah and Judge Grenache makes this a truly unique expression of a Rhône varietal wine.

“(\$40) Good full red. Complex nose melds cherry, licorice, fresh herbs and pepper, plus a candied suggestion of kirsch. Then sexy, sweet and deep, offering a good combination of kirsch, pepper and spice flavors and savory, saline nuances. Serious but fine-grained tannins spread out to coat the palate on the rich aftertaste.”

Rated (91) by
Stephen Tanzer
“*International Wine Cellar*”