

T O R

TOR Cabernet Sauvignon Mast-Cimarossa Vineyards, 2005

Vintage

When you examine all the statistical data, 2005 resembles the 1994 and 1991 vintages of recent history. They were all very, very long growing seasons with good crop levels, benign advantageous picking conditions, resulting in excellent dark wines. In a nutshell, if you were patient and dropped the right amount of fruit (up to 50% on some sites) to put your vines in balance, 2005 was a great year for most Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

The year started out with heavy rain, but a dry spell in March put bud break right on time. May and June were wet months with up to 8" falling in many of the vineyards. July was warm, before we settled into a long cool growing that lasted well into November for our Cabernet harvest. This extremely long hang time developed very mature flavors and dark colors, but at lower alcohol levels than 2001-2004. I was quoted in a futures tasting article for the *Wine Spectator* as saying the vintage was "Bordeaux-like." I'll add to that, "Bordeaux-like in a great year."

Vineyards

'Cimarossa' means 'red hill top' in Italian which aptly defines this very special hillside vineyard. The elevation is 2,100 feet and the soils are predominately red volcanic rock and dust. Not much can be cultivated on these steep hills besides the vines and some olive trees (which produce my favorite California oil). This is a special place: the clusters are small, the berries are tiny, but the flavors are BIG!

Mast is tucked into the western foothills are many of Napa Valley's most historic and famous vineyards. Not far from Martha's and Dominus, and on the same western-facing foothill is Mast, first planted in 1972. Still family-owned, this mature vineyard has several blocks, and we feel we are in a very special one. It has the most stone and rock particulates, and a nice gentle slope. For these and many other good reasons, Mast has been a vineyard designate for us for several years.

Winemaking

Our philosophy has been to let great vineyards produce great wines. We stay out of the way – our approach could be described as minimalist winemaking. The grapes are picked cold at the first light of morning, and crushed cold at the winery shortly thereafter. The 'must' is presoaked till its indigenous yeast begins metabolizing grape sugars and starts the winemaking process. We closely monitor flavors, color, and extracts during fermentation. We use all French oak coopers, predominately Taransaud Chateau for our Cabernet Sauvignon barrels. The 2005s were aged in these 20 gallon custom barrels with minimal racking for a total of 21 months.

The Wine

(60% Mast – 40% Cimarossa)

I am amazed the way these two vineyards fit together in most years. In 2004 it was mostly Cimarossa, for 2005 it is mostly Mast. It is the wine that I feel best reflects both vineyards and vintage. This is a rounder, plusher wine which is defined by the softer tannins of Mast, and the vintage, which offered us softer flavor profiles across Napa Valley's appellations.

For descriptors, I quote Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, "Brooding aromas of black fruits, licorice and menthol. Sweet, dense, thick and powerful, with a savory character and excellent depth to its fruit. This is simultaneously juicy and plush, with a faint herbal element adding complexity and leavening the wine's chocolatey sweetness. Bright acids and sweet tannins give this a suave finish."



Tor Kenward has hit home runs with a number of his Cabernets. Offering up notes of blueberries, black raspberries, and currants in a soft, Pomerol-like style, the 2005

Cabernet Sauvignon Mast-Cimarossa possesses sweet tannins, and a plush texture as well as finish.

Rating 93

Robert Parkers

"The Wine Advocate"