

T O R

TOR ROCK Syrah Hudson Vineyard, 2006

Vintage

The 2006 vintage was another cool vintage for the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Bud break happened a little earlier than 'normal' and the wet ground from all the rain from the winter allowed for the vines to set a healthy crop. This good set of fruit allowed for us to thin the vineyards back through multiple fruit dropping passes to the crop level that we desired. This season was marked more by what did not happen as opposed to what did happen. It was a very even, cool, steady growing season without any significant heat spikes or rains other than a bit of rain in the first week of October. The Syrahs from 2006 are some of the biggest/darkest wines we have ever made and as delicious as they are now they should only improve with bottle age.

Vineyard

Lee Hudson is one of the best grape farmers in California, very dedicated to quality, and honestly evaluates his work, always fine tuning, seeking higher ground. So when Lee called me in 2005 and said he had a newer block of Syrah that he thought might produce some of his vineyards best Syrah, I had no option but to say, "sign me up for as much as you can." Sadly, this amounted to a few rows, but they were in the rockiest part of the vineyard. Most of the rows are planted to the Syrah Noir Clone, which has proven itself in many of California's cooler vineyard sights. A few rows are planted to the "Alban" Clone - propagated by Californian John Alban from cuttings off of many of the Rhone Valley's most celebrated Syrah planting. The two clones are planted right next to each other, share similar soils and of course climate, but taste different from grape to bottle - therefore we keep them separate.

Winemaking

Great Syrah for us is the most labor intensive wine we make, the fruit has to be hand sorted multiple times to remove dehydrated berries. Some are 100% whole cluster fermentations, this means we ferment with clusters of grapes still on their stems which requires very labor intensive small lot fermentations. Other Syrahs are fermented using destemmed fruit. In part what determines the different fermentation styles is if the seeds are sweet and the stems brown, is it closer to whole cluster where if the stems are still green when the fruit is brought in we will usually destem the clusters. After fermentation, the wine is pressed direct to small French Burgundy barrels. Our Syrahs are then aged with little racking for 21 months before being bottled unfiltered and unfinned.

The Wine

Massively rich/forceful nose of meats, oak, earth, spice and a hint of black cherry and chocolate. On the palate this wine just takes over. To call it dense is really not fair. Dry aged beef, smoking coals, blackberry, bacon fat and sweet oak show themselves on the palate along with masses of sweet/ripe tannins. The finish on this just does not quit and tapers off after a minute or so so a sweet dove tail of sweetness.



"Notes of tapenade, classic blackberry, cassis and sweet cherry fruit."

Rated 92-94 by
Robert M. Parker, Jr.,
"The Wine Advocate"