

The Great Places

SYRAH

BALLARD CANYON AVA

2019

August James Stolpman

VINEYARD COMPONENTS

6,000 vine/acre own-rooted / head-pruned / pre-clonal
GREAT PLACES August James Block Syrah

GRAPE VARIETY

100% pre-clonal Syrah

TONNAGE

1.5 tons

ALCOHOL

14%

VINIFICATION FACTS

native fermentation without sulfur addition in stainless steel

COOPERAGES & ELEVAGE

16 months in neutral French oak 500L ermitage
puncheon

HARVEST DATE

October 14th

TOTAL PRODUCTION

114 cases

SENSORY

Insanely aromatic, almost like a fresh, cool blue-fruit fog drifting out of the glass touched with airy menthol. The palate is immediately inundated with billowy smoothness and cushioning layers give way to a well-married tannin and acid-driven finish. Typical syrah notes of olive, smoke, and blood DO NOT show themselves in this singularly unique cuvee from pre-clonal syrah vines, as if these vines are their own species. The pure tactile pleasure of the mouth feel leaves me obsessed.

BACKGROUND

In early 2013, after a seminal visit to Domaine Auguste Clape the previous summer, we set out to model a vineyard after Clape's Reynard parcel. We propagated special pre-clonal Syrah cuttings from just 49 vines to 12,000, all head-pruned, own-rooted, and planted so densely that all work must be done by hand. The steep, east-facing hillside produced its first crop, barely 400 pounds of fruit, in 2017, the same year our son August James was born.

GREAT PLACES SYRAH

Syrachs that make the cut into our highest tier "The Great Places" come from just 8 acres of our steepest hillsides where we have taken an approach unprecedented in the New World. First, the pre-clonal strains are wholly unique and selected from 100 year old vineyard sites. Then, this Syrah material is planted own-rooted and head-pruned at just 2.5 x 3 feet spacing. Each vine puts all of its energy into ripening 2-3 clusters of concentrated, complex fruit each year. All work is done by hand.

The brand is named after one of our favorite Serine parcels in Cote-Rotie "Les Grandes Places".

VINTAGE

2019 marked the second vintage in a row without harvest-time heat spikes. Facial expressions among the team conveyed our shared thoughts and feelings without saying a word – a certain giddiness that we had a shot at replaying 2018 armed with that year of heat-free experience. And, the acids were hanging even higher and fresher than 2018.

In 2019 we harvested less than 2 tons from all 12,000 vines, which means it took the grapes from 9 vines to create just one bottle of Great Places August James. No wonder this wine has unprecedented texture and flavor!

The best wine we have made and with so few bottles, it is a sin to pop a cork prior to 2024. 114 cases produced.