

STOLPMAN VINEYARDS 2012 ESTATE GROWN SYRAH

BALLARD CANYON

TECHNICAL & TASTING NOTES:



VINEYARD COMPONENTS:

50% from high-density plantings,
30% blocks 5 & 6, 20% from
original plantings

VARIETAL BLEND:

100% Syrah

VINIFICATION:

open-top concrete fermentors,
fermented with native yeasts;
without addition of sulfur at
crush

FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 14.1%, TA: 5.7 g/L
pH: 3.8

VATTING/FERMENTATION:

50% wholecluster fermentation.
On average 3 weeks on skins,
with minimal punching of the
caps

COOPERAGES & ELEVAGE:

Aged in 500L puncheons, 15%
new, for 11 months; another 10
months "assemblage" in large
tanks. Racked twice; neither
fined nor filtered.

RELEASE DATE:

September 1st 2014

BOTTLED DATE:

May 27 & 28th 2014

TOTAL PRODUCTION:

4100 cases

THE LEAD UP

2012 was a dream vintage in which nature seemingly telegraphed every move. Ruben and Sashi coordinated La Cuadrilla in routine all-night pickings through late October to deliver fruit at the peak of bright-ripeness.

When Ruben Solorzano handed off the last load of 2012 Syrah to Sashi Moorman he reported to me with a broad smile "I gave Sashi perfect fruit, now it's his turn to make perfect wine."

And that's exactly what Sashi did.

THE PROCESS

The winery team took a hands off approach and let the magic of 2012 shine through.

The grapes went into our brand new open top concrete fermenters unsulfured, and 50% whole-cluster. On average, each lot spent three weeks natively fermenting on the skins until the free-run juice was transferred to 500 liter french puncheons, 15% of which were new. After 11 months, Sashi made his final assemblage decisions and he transferred the wine into larger tanks to rest and integrate another 10 months. Throughout its life, the wine was only racked twice and we bottled it un-fined and unfiltered.

Sashi chose to make the wine monocepage, 100% Syrah. At harvest, he passed on Viognier co-fermentation to avoid adulterating the perfect fruit. Later in blending sessions, Sashi again decided against blending any Grenache or Roussanne into the wine, a departure from the 2011 cuvee.

THE RESULT

Packaged in the new Ballard Canyon etched Syrah bottle and updated label, the change in appearance signifies the entirely new playing field for Estate Syrah. On rare occasions do I come across a wine that smells so good I don't need to taste it, instead satisfied with taking deep breathes, nose stuck into the stem. This wine is one of them.

The wine is darker than previous vintages despite no extra effort to extract skin pigment. The predominant aromas reflect the color in showing primarily black and purple fruits with lighter red on the periphery. If I had to pick an actual smell, I would pin fresh berries over heavy cream. Woodiness lingers behind the attractive perfume integrated through fermenting on dry-farmed stems rather than aging in new oak. As the bottle opens up, more verve red fruit shines through the nose and the wine gains complexity. To appreciate more of what the 2012 Estate Syrah has to offer, decant or open an hour prior to serving.

When I finally get around to tasting the wine, the body flows smoothly through the mouth without rustic textures often present in our young Syrahs. The wine already shows great integration but I sense pent up energy. This wine will further blossom in the coming few years. There is a touch of bloodiness backed by graphite on the finish. Fruit persists long after swallowing and although noticeably dry, the tannins are already fine.

As I savor the flavor, I think of our dirt, the fine clay dust and crunch of churned Limestone chunks. Part of the dry chalkiness on the after-taste comes from the 50% whole-cluster fermentation.