

STOLPMAN VINEYARDS

2011 ESTATE GROWN SYRAH

BALLARD CANYON

TECHNICAL & TASTING NOTES:

HARVEST DATES:
October 10th - 14th, 2011

VATTING:
16 - 21 days

COOPERAGES & ELEVAGE:
265L cigras & 228L barriques,
of which 15% new; some
neutral puncheon, and a small
fraction in concrete for 11-14
months total elevage

WHOLE CLUSTER:
10 - 15%

VINEYARD COMPONENTS:
Combination of all Syrah
Blocks; including 1,2,5,6, and B

VARIETAL BLEND:
94% Syrah, 3% Grenache, 2%
Roussanne, 1% Viognier

FINAL ANALYSIS:
Alcohol: 14.4%, TA: 5.2g/L
pH: 3.7

BOTTLING DATE:
June 12 - 14th 2013

RELEASE DATE:
October 1st 2013

CASE PRODUCTION:
5100 cases



If you don't like this wine, we're in trouble. This bottling represents the largest annual production of any Stolpman wine by at least threefold. Being the largest, flagship wine from the vineyard each year, Estate Syrah is the truest representation of our Terroir and the best indicator of an individual vintage's unique conditions. Estate Syrah serves as the introduction to Stolpman Vineyards for customers around the country and occasionally the world, so we pressure ourselves to make this wine sing, and price it reasonably to attract new devotees. Part of this equation entails keeping higher-end Syrah production small, so as not to remove all of the magic from the Estate Syrah.

To ensure the Estate Syrah is the best wine possible, Sashi adds small amounts of Viognier to lots of Syrah fruit that he feels can benefit from more delicate, lifted perfume. Sashi makes this final decision in the vineyard, a day or two before picking. This method was developed in Cote Rotie because the transparent Viognier juice absorbs more red pigment from the Syrah skins than the Syrah grapes own translucent juice, creating a darker, inkier final product. Dark color is rarely an issue in Ballard Canyon, so for us, Viognier co-fermentation is all about hitting a precise aroma profile.

The tiny post-frost 2011 Syrah clusters showed off a deeper, darker profile than the brighter, red-hued harvests of any vintage in the past. For the majority of the Syrah blocks, Sashi chose to play into this profile rather than attempt to lift it with Viognier co-fermentation. The final percentage on the 2011 Estate Syrah hovers around 1%, versus an average of 3% for the 2007-2010 vintages.

Once the wine finished secondary fermentation and Sashi was able to taste through barrels representational of the final product, he chose to add 3% Grenache to taper the masculinity of the monstrously concentrated vintage. Then he added 2% Roussanne for smoother, round textures.

While unusual, using white Roussanne to temper the Red beast is used in Chateau Neuf du Pape and Hermitage, and is even officially allowed by French AOC Wine Laws. Sashi first employed Roussanne in reds for the Hilltops Syrah wine, most notably to tame the mean, tannic 2006 Hilltops by filling all of the just-emptied L'Avion puncheons with Syrah and letting the red age another 10 months on the gross white lees (unfiltered pulp and skin particles).

2011 Estate Syrah final blend: 94% Syrah, 3% Grenache, 2% Roussanne, 1% Viognier (co-fermented)

The 2011 Estate Syrah still shows its true heart of darkness despite blending. The dark purple color; the brooding aromas of charcuterie and plum dominate the wine with pretty red, wild berries, and purple flowers on the periphery. My first thought upon smelling the wine prior to bottling was, "this is going to be a bruiser." On the mouth, the wine proves soft and delicate, showcasing Sashi's winemaking and chef-honed blending talents. I'm still reminded of walking through the dark shade of a tall, thick forest, but certainly not an intimidating one; more of a whimsical, Peter Pan or Summer family vacation forest. This is a happy wine with tons to offer.

Drink now or hold 10-15 years if you're patient enough! - Peter Stolpman