

STOLPMAN VINEYARDS

2010 RUBEN'S BLOCK

BALLARD CANYON

TECHNICAL & TASTING NOTES:

HARVEST DATES:

September 19th, 2010

VATTING:

22 days

COOPERAGES & ELEVAGE:

neutral 500L puncheon

WHOLE CLUSTER:

100%

VINEYARD COMPONENTS:

Ruben's Côte Rôtie Block,
own-rooted, 6,000 vines per
acre, staked diagonally

VARIETAL BLEND:

100% Syrah

FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 14.1%, TA: 6.4g/L
pH: 3.9

BOTTLING DATE:

March 5th 2012

RELEASE DATE:

October 1st 2013

CASE PRODUCTION:

110 cases



After visiting Renee Rostaing in January 2006, Ruben returned to Ballard Canyon inspired. He set out to replicate Domaine Rostaing's limestone riddled Cote Blonde vineyard.

Cote Rotie consists of east facing mountain sides perched on the Northern tip of Syrah's motherland. Farmers there cram as many vines in as possible leaving just enough space between to climb through. They are unburdened by the constraints of tractor widths on the hillsides too vertical to navigate. Because of the lack of topsoil and overall fertility, each vine produces tiny yields, so in order to make the vineyards viable, high density plantings are used not only for concentration through root competition, but as a necessary means to make enough wine.

To capture as much sunlight as possible during each morning's Eastward exposure window, every two vines are trained to a single vertex on top. 2 vines end up casting the shadow of one, allowing the sun to penetrate through to bath each leaf with energy. In the warmer, sunnier sites further south such as Hermitage, St. Joseph, and Cornas, the vines are planted in similarly tight spacing, but trained vertically as sun exposure is no issue.

When Ruben returned from Europe, he focused on the steep East facing hill above Ballard Canyon Road that Tom Stolpman previously wrote off as too steep to plant. He own-rooted (no root stock) over 6,000 Syrah vines just one meter away from each other and staked them diagonally just as he had seen in Cote Rotie.

Even with the similar East facing exposure as Cote Rotie, Ruben's Block still receives much more sun intensity. Today, we see the benefit of the diagonal training as a moderating effect on the vines. As Ruben watches his block throughout the day, he observes that each vine receives quick respites of shade. These siesta breaks allowed Ruben to commence dry farming the block in 2007, just a year after he planted the vines.

Because each head-pruned vine tasks itself to ripen only a few clusters, Ruben's Block ripens 2-3 weeks before any other Syrah. The result is phenolic ripeness at much lower alcohol. Ruben's Block Syrah carries a much more elegant, old-world mouth-feel due to less glycerol, but complex flavors stemming from the low vine yield are tightly stuffed into the lightweight package. Because of this, much like traditional Cote Rotie, Ruben's Block Syrah takes years to unfurl and open. We release an extremely limited portion of this wine three years after harvest. The rest is held for further maturity.

We look forward to conducting side-by-side tastings of Ruben's block with Cote Rotie Syrahs and down the line, we will do the same with our new "Cornas Block". All of these wines are intended for long-term cellaring. - Peter Stolpman