

Stolpman Vineyards

2009 Vintage Reviewed by Stephen Tanzer

2009 Stolpman Vineyards Angeli Red Wine Santa Ynez Valley

(15.3% alcohol; from the winery's best barrels of syrah): Full medium ruby. Slightly high-toned aromas of black raspberry, smoky minerality, brown spices and Peking smoked duck. Like liquid velvet in the mouth, with superconcentrated, marrowy flavors of dark fruits, spices and minerals. A real essence of syrah, with the sheer verve to keep the alcohol in the deep background. Finishes with palate-staining perfume of crushed black cherry and pepper. I was reminded of La Landonne, but this wine will offer much more early appeal. (ST) **95**

2009 Stolpman Vineyards L'Avion Santa Ynez Valley

(spent 15 months on its lees): Straw-gold. Sexy leesy scents give a smoky, carnal quality to the aromas of orange blossom, wild mint and botanical herbs. A gamey, very dry midweight, in a distinctly Old World style, with plenty of alcoholic weight but fruit currently in the background. Melts into the palate on the aftertaste like a sake. (ST) **90**

2009 Stolpman Vineyards La Croce Red Wine Santa Ynez Valley

(a 50/50 blend of sangiovese and syrah, co-fermented): Bright ruby-red. Aromas of crushed blackberry, violet and smoked meat. Juicy, supple and sweet, with lovely floral lift giving the wine noteworthy inner-mouth energy. In its richness without weight, this feels more European than New World. Finishes with a fine dusting of firm tannins and complex, lingering notes of meat, spices, flowers and flinty minerals. This distinctive and very successful blend can be enjoyed now, but it also has the spine to age. (ST) **92**

2009 Stolpman Vineyards Sangio degli Angeli Red Wine Santa Ynez Valley

(100% sangiovese; a barrel selection from high-density ridgeline blocks): Good dark ruby. Vibrant aromas of black cherry, medicinal herbs and oak. Dense and tactile in the mouth, with a distinctly chewy texture and a restrained sweetness to its red cherry and menthol flavors. This boasts impressive texture for a California sangiovese, as well as the tannic spine to support a slow evolution in bottle. (ST) **91**

2009 Stolpman Vineyards Sangiovese Estate Grown Santa Ynez Valley

(aged for 30 months in neutral 500-liter puncheons): Bright red-ruby. Cherry, pomegranate, flint and menthol aromas were initially dominated by oak but slowly gained in purity and brightness with air. Supple and spicy on entry, with the strong oak component dulling the wine's cherry and herb flavors. The slightly drying finish features dusty tannins. I wanted more primary fruit--and less lumber. (A second bottle of roughly equal quality came across as slightly syrupy, showing good sweetness but lacking the snap and lift of this winery's 2010 syrahs. It, too, was carrying a heavy load of chocolatey oak.) (ST) **88**

2009 Stolpman Vineyards Syrah Estate Grown Santa Ynez Valley

Bright ruby-red. Urgent aromas of crushed blackberry, violet, pepper and Asian spices, with a meaty nuance. At once sweet and savory, with a tactile mouth feel and terrific definition to its flavors of dark berries, spices and smoky minerality. As with most of the current releases from Stolpman, this wine stands out for its mid-palate energy and perfume. Finishes with suave tannins, lovely floral lift and excellent thrust. A compelling value in syrah. (ST) **91**

2009 Stolpman Vineyards Syrah Hilltops Estate Grown Santa Ynez Valley

Bright medium ruby. Scented, high-pitched, very pure nose offers blackberry, exotic spices, flinty minerality and a whiff of meat. Densely packed and seamless but also sharply delineated, with a saline, smoky minerality and a bit of oak influence partly hiding the wine's inherent sweetness of fruit. Dry, meaty, classic syrah with a wonderfully chewy, palate-

saturating finish. Showed increasing pliancy and nuance as it opened in the glass. (ST) **93**

2009 Stolpman Vineyards Syrah Originals Estate Santa Ynez Valley

(from Stolpman's older syrah blocks, now 17 years old, according to winemaker Sashi Moorman): Bright ruby. Deeply pitched aromas of black cherry, violet and licorice. Brooding and quite primary in the mouth; the least expressive today of this winery's 2009 syrah offerings. The wine's saline impression of density is leavened by good limestone energy. The tannic spine of this rich, layered syrah calls for three or four years of patience. (ST) **92**