

SAXUM BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

2009 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

57% Syrah, 31% Mourvèdre, 12% Grenache

ALC: 15.7%

Cases 750 ml: 450

Cases 1.5 L: 98

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2012

Release Price: \$85

Drink: 2012-2024

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2009 wines, are quite powerful. There are some very substantial tannins on these wines, they are muscular! I feel that these late releases of the 2009's are going to benefit from a few years of cellar age, even more so than any wines we have ever made, so be patient with them. Enjoy some now, but be sure to stash some in your cellar so you can see how they evolve after a few years. You will be well rewarded for waiting.

REVIEWS:

Antonio Galloni, Wine Advocate #196, Aug 2011

Rating: 94

Drink: 2012-2021

The 2009 Bone Rock is a round, enticing red laced with sweet, succulent dark cherries, plums, flowers and spices. It shows remarkable intensity and fabulous balance. Bone Rock is made from the first blocks planted in the James Berry vineyard and is predominantly Syrah, while the James Berry Vineyard (the wine) is Grenache focused. In 2009 the blend was 57% Syrah, 31% Mourvedre and 12% Grenache. The Syrah component was vinified with 100% stems and saw a maceration lasting 50 days. The wine was aged in 60% new oak. Smith bottled the 2009 in May 2011, earlier than the norm (around 30 months), as he wanted to preserve the freshness he had in the tannins. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2021.

This is a thrilling set of wines from Heather and Justin Smith. Everything starts and ends in the vineyards for Justin Smith. His family owns the James Berry Vineyard, one of the rare sites in Paso Robles on limestone. Smith has also planted several other top vineyards in Paso while mentoring a number of his colleagues. Smith describes 2009 as a long, cold growing season with a lot of rain. All of the Grenache and Syrah was in before the big storm on October 13, while the Mourvedre was picked a few weeks later. Smith credits dry-farming for keeping his vines robust and able to withstand the elements. Winemaking is stripped down to the core. Two sorting tables ensure only the finest fruit makes it to the crusher. The grapes are gently destemmed, then undergo around 7 days of cold soak with a high amount of whole berries, and some whole clusters (as noted below). There is no sulfur added at crush. The wines undergo a total of approximately 30-40 days of maceration with indigenous yeasts and are then moved straight to barrel, with their gross lees, for approximately 19 months (longer for the Bone Rock) with no rackings until the wines are prepared for bottling. Smith favors 350 and 400-liter barrels over the more standard 225/228 liter barrique. Smith selects the barrels he thinks are most expressive to site for his single-vineyard wines, then uses the rest of the barrels, which he defines as the punchier, juicier wines, for the Broken Stones

bottling, which is sourced from all of the vineyards in the Saxum lineup. My tasting ended with three barrel samples of the 2010s, another cold, late harvest. These aren't finished wines, but the quality of what I tasted was extraordinary. The first sample was a late-harvested Syrah from Bone Rock (60% whole clusters) co-fermented with 10% Roussanne that was mind-blowing. This may end up being bottled on its own. The second sample was 100% Grenache from concrete. It was full of character and dazzling. The last barrel sample was James Berry Mourvedre (from a hilltop parcel) co-fermented with a little bit of Syrah. It, too, was, full of character. If these 2010s are any indication, Justin and Heather Smith have another fabulous vintage on their hands. I will stop writing before I fill up an entire issue of The Wine Advocate, suffice it to say readers should do everything they can to taste these majestic wines.

2008 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

83% Syrah, 13% Mourvèdre, 4% Grenache

ALC: 15.5%

Cases 750 ml: 312

Cases 1.5 L: 48

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2011

Release Price: \$75

Drink: 2011-2024

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2008 Bone Rock is maybe the most structured version yet, I find myself being sucked into it while tasting, like it's a black hole, brooding is a fitting descriptor. Because of its density, tannin, and acidity, it really needs a few years to unfold, so be patient please!

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #190, Aug 2010

Rating: 96-98

Drink: N/A

Not yet bottled, the 2008 Bone Rock (84% Syrah, 13% Mourvedre, and the rest Grenache) exhibits a chalky minerality intermixed with floral blackberry and blueberry fruit. Some subtle spice is present in this wine, which is made with a high percentage of whole clusters, yet no stemminess is apparent. Unctuously textured, it is one of the thickest and most viscous of any of the 2008s. The wine has profound concentration yet impressive delineation and acidity in the background. This is a massive powerhouse that needs more time in barrel (which is obviously why it hasn't been bottled yet), and should evolve for 15 or more years. This wine is likely to be aged for up to 32 months or more in a combination of wood barrels (very few new), before being bottled unfinned and unfiltered by Justin Smith. This wine has a great upside and should have tremendous longevity.

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2011

Rating: 95

Drink: now through 2024

Tight and muscular, with dense, chewy tar, blackberry, mineral, cedar, sage and roasted herb flavors. Full-blown and intense, yet for all its size and stature, this is very compelling and

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complete, sure to benefit from cellaring. Syrah (83 percent) with Mourvèdre and Grenache. Drink now through 2024.

2007 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

82% Syrah, 13% Mourvèdre, 5% Grenache

ALC: 15.7%

Cases 750 ml: 336

Cases 1.5 L: 56

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2010

Release Price: \$75

Drink: 2011-2023

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Our 2007s, are what I feel is the best vintage yet for Saxum. So yes, I think each of these wines is the best that we have done, they are more complex, layered, and concentrated than previous years. These wines have a long life ahead of them due to their great acidity and tannin structure, yet they are enjoyable now because they are so well balanced. The 2007's are chameleons too. When you first pour yourself a taste they quickly start changing in the glass. Every smell and taste produces a new element, the first second there are violets and the next is roasted meats, truly fascinating. It will be a joy to watch how they develop in bottle over the next decade or more.

The Bone Rock was bottled in January of 2010, after 26 months in oak. I felt that their tannins could use a little extra time in barrel to smooth out. Please let them rest for a few months after they arrive, they are still just babies.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #184, Aug 2009

Rating: 98-100

Drink: 2009 - 2024

With considerable power, depth, and intensity, this is sensational stuff, as is the 2007 Bone Rock James Berry Vineyard, another candidate for perfection. A blend of 82% Syrah, 13% Mourvedre, and 5% Grenache, it exhibits abundant aromas of blue and black fruits, acacia flowers, spice, pepper, and earth. The wine is full-bodied with a liqueur of minerals (as if wet rocks were liquified and added to the fermenting grapes), a dense texture, and the vintage's elegance, precision, freshness, and good acids, which provide lift and enhance its flamboyant, opulent style.

One of California's super-star producers, Saxum owns one of the state's most remarkable vineyard sites, the James Berry Vineyard, which has been broken into a number of different blocks, all planted on rocky limestone hillsides. This estate's approach to winemaking is decidedly artisanal, with extraordinarily small yields as well as a minimalistic winemaking philosophy. Proprietors Justin and Heather Smith, who seem much too young to be producing such prodigious wines, fashion separate blends from the different blocks of the James Berry

Vineyard. They also produce a cuvee from the 7-acre Heart Stone Vineyard (also planted on limestone soils) and one from the Booker Vineyard. Saxum's 2006s are all home runs, but the utterly prodigious 2007s should resonate for decades, and showcase the brilliant potential of these limestone hillside sites west of Highway 101. Kudos to everyone at Saxum. My visit began with two of Smith's experimental cuvees, which are only available to mailing list customers. As remarkable as the 2006s are, the 2007s are even more prodigious, showcasing just how brilliant certain Paso Robles terroirs can be. Even the most cynical observers of the Rhone Ranger scene will have to take notice of these wines. Even though some of the 2007s had just undergone bottling, I was blown away by how well they performed just a week after being bottled (often one of the worst times to taste a wine). In short, Saxum's prodigious 2007s are even more nuanced, complex, and concentrated than their brilliant 2006s.

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Feb 28, 2011

Rating: 98

Drink: now through 2022

At points ultrarich, opulent and elegant, providing a broad range of dark berry, loamy earth, spice and cedar flavors, with touches of black licorice, sage and tobacco. Powerful yet restrained, gaining weight, depth and traction on the finish, where this ends with a peppery minerality that's fascinating. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, Nov/Dec 2010

Rating: 96

Inky purple. A sexy, intensely perfumed bouquet of blackberry, boysenberry, Moroccan spices and violet, with a seductive incense quality that gains strength with air. Lush and creamy on the palate, offering deep black and blue fruit flavors and exotic floral character. Reaches every corner of the palate and finishes with outstanding clarity and powerful floral nuances.

2006 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

76% Syrah, 18% Mourvèdre, 6% Grenache

ALC: 16.7%

Cases 750 ml: 350

Cases 1.5 L: 46

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2009

Release Price: \$75

Drink: now-2020

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Grenache was aged in all new French Oak barriques. It is a wine built for the ages. Dense, structured, meaty and spicy, with loads of red and black fruits. The higher than normal dose of Mourvedre in the blend really makes it all happen.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #184, Aug 2009

Rating: 96+

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Drink: 2009 - 2024

No wimpy wine, the 2006 Bone Rock James Berry Vineyard (76% Syrah, 18% Mourvedre, and 6% Grenache) has over 16% alcohol. It possesses phenomenal texture, stunning purity, and remarkable freshness, which, again, is attributable to the limestone soils as well as the proprietor's brilliant hands-off winemaking philosophy. A complex perfume of roasted meats, black fruits, spring flowers, charcoal, and spice is followed by a wine of enormous richness (yet it is neither overweight nor heavy). Beautiful freshness permeates the wine's black fruit flavors and full-bodied power and length. The finish lasts for nearly a minute. This 2006 should evolve for 12-15+ years.

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: March 31, 2009

Rating: 92

Drink: now through 2014

A tasty mouthful of Syrah, this is full-bodied and concentrated, rich and plush, with layers of ripe blackberry, wild berry, mineral and graphite, ending with a long, persistent finish that keeps repeating the dark berry themes. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache. Drink now through 2014. 450 cases made.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, Nov/Dec 2008

Rating: 95

Inky ruby. Exotically perfumed bouquet of red berries, fruitcake, Asian spices and white flowers. Impressively fresh, with vibrant raspberry, blackcurrant and floral pastille flavors. Zesty minerality adds urgency to the deep, almost sweet fruit, with fine-grained tannins adding grip. The endless finish strongly echoes the spice and minerality of this suave knock-out.

2005 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

93% Syrah, 7% Grenache

ALC: 16.1%

Cases 750 ml: 300

Cases 1.5 L: 30

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2008

Release Price: \$75

Drink: now-2020

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #177, Jun 2008

Rating: 96

Drink: 2010-2025

A sensational effort, the 2005 Bone Rock James Berry Vineyard is a combination of 93% Syrah and 7% Grenache. This decadently gorgeous, lavishly concentrated, stunningly pure wine was aged in demi-muids/pungeons. A terrific texture is accompanied by a sumptuous bouquet and equally prodigious flavors of kirsch, cassis, licorice, smoke, and crushed rocks. It still has some structure to resolve, but this fabulous effort should hit its stride in 2-3 years, and keep for 12-15 years. The bottled 2005s are all performing well.

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: March 31, 2008

Rating: 93

Drink: now through 2012

Dark, dense, rich and concentrated, with a tight, firm band of blackberry, wild berry, dark chocolate and smoky oak, revealing wonderful depth, concentration and complexity. Syrah and Grenache. Drink now through 2012. 350 cases made.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, Nov/Dec 2007

Rating: 95

Glass-staining purple. Exotic boysenberry, kirsch and candied violet aromas are positively intoxicating, expanding with air and picking up a wild, head shop-like character. Deep, chewy and sweet, offering palate-coating dark berry liqueur flavors and urgent mineral lift. It's remarkable for a wine to possess such weight and sweetness while maintaining focus-even elegance. Finishes with outstanding breadth and cling, leaving flowers and boysenberry in its wake. "This is the last one we'll release this year," owner/winemaker Justin Smith told me, also noting that he's not afraid to put syrah into a high percentage of new oak, depending on the vintage, since "it's a variety that can easily handle it"

2004 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

85% Syrah, 12% Grenache, 3% Mourvèdre

ALC: 15.8%

Cases 750 ml: 475

Cases 1.5 L: 25

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: February 2007

Release Price: \$65

Drink: now-2014

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The '04 Bone Rock is the most subtle and restrained that we have ever produced, yet it is still a big juicy mouthful. It will reward patience and blossom with 3-5 years of cellaring.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #166, Aug 2006

Rating: 93

Drink: 2006-2018

Made from a blend of 85% Syrah, 12% Grenache, and 3% Mourvedre, there are 500 cases of the 2004 Bone Rock James Berry Vineyard. It possesses a saturated ruby/purple color along with tight, restrained aromatics of blackberries, blueberries, and flowers, good acidity, fleshy, full-bodied flavors, and fine elegance, delicacy, and finesse ... rare for a wine of this size and intensity. It will drink well for 10-12 years.

Stephen Tanzer, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, Sept/Oct 2006

Rating: 94

Deep, bright ruby-red. Deeply pitched aromas of black raspberry, violet, gunflint, tobacco, tar and cola. Lush and sweet but firm and imploded; deeper and more concentrated than the "regular" James Berry bottling but less evolved. Finishes with superb breadth and viscosity, but has the ripe acids-not to

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mention the rocky minerality-to maintain its shape and balance. Wonderfully deep wine.

2003 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

88% Syrah, 8% Grenache, 4% Mourvèdre

ALC: 15.7%

Cases 750 ml: 250

Cases 1.5 L: 25

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: December 2005

Release Price: \$65

Drink: now-2015

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

For those unfamiliar with the Bone Rock Syrah, the majority of the fruit comes from the Bone Rock Block at our James Berry Vineyard. The vineyard is located within the Templeton Gap, a low point in the Santa Lucia Mountains that allows the cool maritime breezes to moderate the temperatures. The Bone Rock block is a steep hillside that in 1990 we used jackhammers to carve out a four acre, stepped terrace vineyard in the almost solid calcareous soil, unearthing fossilized whale bones in the process.

There are three main factors that make the Templeton Gap such a unique growing region. The deeply fractured shale limits the growth of the vines, and in turn produces miniscule amounts of extremely concentrated wine. The huge diurnal fluctuations coupled with the extremely high calcium content of the soils allow the fruit to retain its natural acidity, even when picked at full physiological ripeness. What you end up with is a wine that wears its weight well, remaining balanced despite its huge concentration.

The 2003 Bone Rock, like its siblings the Rocket Block and Broken Stones, is a wine of great density and explosive fruit, yet also has a sense of elegance and balance that is rare among wines of such concentration. It is immensely pleasing to drink now, yet will continue to gain in complexity as it ages, if you can keep your hands off it.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #159, Jun 2005

Rating: 95

Drink: 2007-2020

A blend of 88% Syrah, 8% Grenache, and 4% Mourvedre, the 2003 Bone Rock James Berry Vineyard, which will not be released until the fall, is a structured and broodingly backward offering. It boasts an inky/purple color in addition to classic aromas of blackberry liqueur, camphor, pain grille, and subtle notions of Provencal herbs and pepper. Full-bodied, with tremendous richness, great balance, and sweet tannin, this stunning, marvelously concentrated wine should benefit from 2-3 years of bottle age, and last for 12-15. The 2003s were bottled about seven weeks before my visit, but I could hardly complain about the fact they weren't "showing." I highly

recommend that wine enthusiasts who love Rhone Ranger wines pay a visit to the James Berry Vineyard, one of the true grand cru sites in the region.

Stephen Tanzer, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, Jul/Aug 2005

Rating: 93

(15.7% alcohol; mostly from south-facing vines in the highest, rockiest part of the property; includes bits of grenache and mourvedre) Bright ruby-red. Musky, wild aromas of black cherry, gunflint and espresso. Hugely ripe but still youthfully closed following the March bottling. Today this conveys more of an impression of surmaturite than the other 2003 releases and a bit less inner-mouth energy. But this is compellingly rich wine. Interestingly, Smith told me that he blended in a bit of fruit from the lower, cooler parts of the property, from vines harvested as much as six weeks later, and that he intends to do more of this in the future.

2002 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

93% Syrah, 7% Grenache

ALC: 15.8%

Cases 750 ml: 300

Cases 1.5 L: 30

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2008

Release Price: \$48

Drink: now-2020

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #154, Aug 2004

Rating: 95

Drink: N/A

The 2002 Syrah James Berry Vineyard Bone Rock, which had been bottled several weeks before my tasting, was not displaying any ill effects from its recent bottling. More primordial (of course, it's a year younger), it exhibits a saturated plum/purple color along with a spectacular nose of blackberries, licorice, kirsch, and flinty/crushed stones. Full-bodied, with a spectacular texture as well as a massive finish, it possesses a slightly later harvest sur-maturite character than its siblings. A blend of 88% Syrah and 12% Grenache, it spent 18 months in French oak, was never racked, and was bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. This is the best recent trilogy I've experienced since Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings!

An emerging superstar, Justin Smith, who "focuses exclusively on Syrah from the windswept hills of west Paso Robles," is undoubtedly a talented winemaker. These wines' richness, texture, and compelling aromatics have more in common with his southern neighbor, Sine Qua Non, than just about anything produced in the Paso Robles area. These wines rock ... and that's putting it mildly!

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2005

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Rating: 75

A curious concoction, with a syrupy, slightly balsamic flavor that veers to dry and leathery, ending with a touch of bitterness. Tasted three times, with two bottles showing off characteristics and one that was more impressive. 300 cases made.

2001 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

92% Syrah, 5% Grenache, 3% Mourvèdre

ALC: 15.5%

Cases 750 ml: 325

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2007

Release Price: 48

Drink: now-2015

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #154, Aug 2004

Rating: 95

Drink: 2004-2014

The spectacular 2001 Syrah James Berry Vineyard Bone Rock is a 300- case blend of 92% Syrah, 5% Mourvedre, and 3% Grenache aged 21 months in both French and Hungarian oak. Racked once, and bottled unfinned and unfiltered, it takes its name from fossilized whale bones that were found imbedded in the vineyard's steep, rocky terraces. It boasts great power and richness, but is incredibly well balanced. Its dense ruby/purple color is accompanied by a huge perfume of blackberry liqueur, camphor, licorice, earth, and roasting meat juices. The fabulous complex aromatics are followed by a full-bodied Syrah with great purity, impeccable balance, and world-class richness, complexity, and stature. This amazing effort can be drunk now or cellared for a decade. This is the best recent trilogy I've experienced since Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings!

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Feb 29, 2004

Rating: 93

Drink: now through 2012

An impressive display of rich, zesty wild berry, raspberry jam and blackberry flavors, framed by firm acidity and integrated tannins and finishing with a long, concentrated aftertaste that keeps revealing new flavor facets. Ample tannins for short-term cellaring. Drink now through 2012. 325 cases made.

2000 BONE ROCK JAMES BERRY VINEYARD

92% Syrah, 5% Grenache, 3% Mourvèdre

ALC: 14.8%

Cases 750 ml: 350

Vineyard: Bone Rock Block of James Berry Vineyard

Released: Spring 2003

Release Price: \$48

Drink: now-2012

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #148, Aug 2003

Rating: 92

Drink: 2003-2011

The opulent, sexy, deep ruby/purple-colored 2000 Syrah James Berry Vineyard Bone Rock offers a gorgeous array of aromas including melted road tar, blackberry liqueur, damp earth, cassis, and white flowers. Voluptuous, fleshy, medium to full-bodied, and pure with supple tannin, this terrific Syrah will drink well for 7-8 years.

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Oct 15, 2002

Rating: 93

Drink: now through 2010

Starts slowly but quickly gains momentum, with layers of ripe, rich, deeply concentrated black cherry, blackberry, anise, sage and coffee. Plush and spicy coffee, mocha and grapey watermelon and pomegranate persist on the aftertaste. Best from 2003 through 2010. 350 cases made.