

SAXUM BROKEN STONES

2009 BROKEN STONES

60% Syrah, 20% Mourvèdre, 12% Petite Sirah, 8% Grenache
ALC: 15.6%

Cases 750 ml: 740

Released: August 2011

Release Price: \$85

Drink: now - 2025

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Overall, 2009 was a very cool year. We had such a beautiful, dry Fall we were still able to get everything, even the very late ripening Mourvedre, fully ripe. Due to the long, cool season there is a beautiful freshness and brightness to the wines. They aren't as dense as the previous two vintages, but they have this beautiful purity that I find enthralling. I think they will have a long bottle life, not due to heavy tannins needing time to resolve, but because they are so well balanced they will keep evolving and improving in bottle.

Yes, that's right, there is a decent dose of Petite Sirah in the latest 'Stones! It came from the Paderewski Vineyard (along with some Syrah and Mourvedre) and added a new dimension to the wine. The PS adds some sinister elements, along with a slight herbal edge to the blend. I really enjoy what this variety brings to the table. The blend is fairly typical for a Broken Stones, with big juicy black fruit being front and center, along with plenty of polish and that great stony minerality that our rocky soils bring forth. Please lay this wine down for 6 months or a year. It will continue to improve for many years.

REVIEWS:

Antonio Galloni, Wine Advocate #196, Aug 2011

Rating: 96

Drink: 2014-2021

The 2009 Broken Stones is sourced from all of the estate's vineyards, which in this vintage includes Paderewski fruit for the first time, although most of the fruit was sourced from James Berry. Today it comes across as rather tightly wound and implosive, although with air the wine's potential becomes more evident. Dark cherries, licorice and smoke wrap around the intense finish. Floral notes add the final layers of complexity and nuance. This is another fabulous effort. In 2009 the blend is 60% Syrah, 20% Mourvèdre, 12% Petite Sirah and 8% Grenache. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2021.

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.

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2011

Rating: 95

Drink: now through 2022

This muscle-bound red offers a firm backbone of mineral, loamy earth, spice and cedar, with blackberry, licorice and berry pie flavors folding in behind. The most intense and angular of the new Saxums. Syrah, Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah and Grenache. Drink now through 2022.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, Nov/Oct 2011

Rating: 94

Glass-staining purple. Highly complex, intensely perfumed bouquet of red and dark berry preserves, potpourri, licorice and pipe tobacco, with a strong note of pepperyspices. Deep and juicy, offering palate-staining raspberry and boysenberry flavors and a complete absence of rough edges. Closes sappy and sweet, with excellent clarity and spicy thrust. Really vivacious wine, and balanced to age.

2008 BROKEN STONES

79% Syrah, 13% Grenache, 8% Mourvèdre
ALC: 15.6%

Cases 750 ml: 600

Released: August 2010

Release Price: \$75

Drink: now - 2025

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2008 vintage..... I have to compare it to 2007, very little winter rainfall like '07, and a fairly moderate growing season. A little more fluctuation in temperature, with some small heat

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spells, but nothing like '03 or '04. Very little crop set, less even than 2007, so there was a lot of concentration like the '07s. We were able to dry farm our vines despite the drought, thanks to our great soils and deep rooted vines. I'd have to say the biggest difference is the tannins. In the '08s the tannins are chunkier, not quite as velvety as the '07s. Some have said the '08s will mature earlier than the '07s, but I'm not so sure, I think the tannin levels are similar, and I think they will have similarly long gorgeous lives.

Let me start out by saying I think this might be my favorite Broken Stones yet, it has a level of intrigue and depth that I haven't seen before. Maybe it's due to the addition of a new vineyard into the mix..... Terry Hoage loves a challenge, so I shouldn't have been surprised when he agreed to do a meter by meter planting on it's own roots on a small, northern slope in his eponymous vineyard. Of course he has to farm it all by hand, no small feat on this steep plot. The fruit that came off was great. Typically a small Syrah cluster weighs about 1/4 pound, these clusters were 8-10 per pound, micro sized, and the two barrels that it produced brought a lovely new component to the wine. Yes, the wine, back to the wine..... deep, introverted, more on the black side of things, licorice, berries, blood sausage, bacon fat, smoked brisket, bay leaves. Plenty of weight on the palate, great concentration, and a long complex finish. Reminds me of a cross between the '06 Stones and the '07 Stones, with a side of funk. It will definitely benefit from a couple years of bottle age and will last a long, long time. Aged mainly in new French Burgundy barrels, never racked except at bottling. Bottled after 19 months unfiltered and unfiltered.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #190, Aug 2010

Rating: 93

Drink: now-2020

The 2008 Broken Stones (79% Syrah, 13% Grenache, and the rest Mourvèdre) has a bluish purple color to the rim, with the classic nose of camphor, charcoal, black currant, and blackberry with hints of licorice and smoke. This intense wine displays great fruit, some structure, and a beautifully seamless texture. It is more evolved and open than the 2007 was at the same time, and just slightly less profound. It should drink nicely for at least a decade.

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

Rating: 96

Drink: now through 2017

An elegant style, rich without being weighty, serving up a mix of spicy dried berry, tobacco leaf, mineral and graphite. This wows you with its finesse and polish, offering subtle flavors that caress the palate. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2020. Tasted twice, with consistent notes.

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

Rating: 93

Opaque purple. Exotic, floral and spice-accented black and blue fruits on the nose, with hints of fruitcake, vanilla and cola emerging with air. Impressively deep and powerful, offering

sweet dark berry preserve and smoky spice flavors and a touch of candied violet. The extremely persistent finish is broad, sweet and penetrating, leaving smoke and spice notes behind. I like this wine's blend of depth and energy.

2007 BROKEN STONES

71% Syrah, 18% Grenache, 11% Mourvèdre

ALC: 15.4%

Cases 750 ml: 650

Released: August 2009

Release Price: \$45

Drink: 2011 - 2025 or decant 4+ hrs

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

2007 was an awesome year for a number of reasons, the biggest being that everything just went smoothly, crop-load was nice and light, the weather was mild and dry and we were able to pick the grapes when we wanted.

20 months in 75% new French Burgundy barrels. Compared to the 2006, the 2007 has more concentration and fruit, but also more tannin and minerality. I'd say at this point in its evolution the 2006 was more open. The 2007 is going to take a little more time to fully come around, but when it does, watch out, it has enormous aging potential.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #184, Aug 2009

Rating: 96+

Drink: 2011-2026

The 2007 Broken Stones (71% Syrah, 18% Grenache, and 11% Mourvèdre) is a gorgeously seamless wine with an inky/blue/purple color, a tight but promising nose of blue and black fruits, incense, charcoal, and extraordinarily pure black raspberry and blackberry fruit, fabulous concentration in the mouth, velvety, well-integrated tannins, and a mind-bogglingly long finish. This wine will benefit from 2-3 years of cellaring, and should keep for 15 or more.

James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2009

Rating: 96

Drink: now through 2017

A full-blown tour de force, pure, ripe, rich and focused, delivering blackberry, huckleberry, boysenberry and spicy mineral notes that are dense without being heavy. Layered and intricate, this is smooth, detailed and long on the finish. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2017. 650 cases made.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar, Nov/Dec 2009

Rating: 95

Saturated ruby. A highly perfumed bouquet displays boysenberry, blueberry, smoked meat, pungent floral oils and strong minerality. Lush, creamy and sweet, offering incisive dark berry flavors and a strong undertone of Asian spices. The

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mineral note builds with air and carries into the finish, which is strikingly pure, focused and persistent. As rich as this wine is, I find no excess weight and a very firm finish.

2006 BROKEN STONES

63% Syrah, 24% Grenache, 13% Mourvèdre
ALC: 16.3%
Cases 750 ml: 820
Released: August 2008
Release Price: \$45
Drink: now through 2020

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2006 Broken Stones differs a bit from previous vintages. We gave it a little more time in barrel, 20 months to be exact, and pushed the release back 6 months to give it extra time in bottle to settle down. The fruit came from James Berry Vineyard, Heart Stone Vineyard, and Booker Vineyard. As before, it is Syrah based but now has a good dose of Grenache and a splash of Mourvèdre. These 2006 wines are fairly forward with a more open structure than the 2005's, which will make them enjoyable at an earlier age.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #184, Aug 2009

Rating: 97

Drink: 2009-2021

The 2006 Broken Stones (63% Syrah, 24% Grenache, and 13% Mourvèdre) blew me away. An inky/purple color and a dazzling, explosive bouquet of black raspberries, camphor, cassis, forest floor, and spring flowers are followed by a rich, elegant wine offering laser-like precision as well as a striking minerality. It is a powerful yet graceful effort that should drink well for 10-12+ years.

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

Rating: 96

Offers waves of ripe, exotic dark berry fruit, with wild berry, raspberry and blackberry jam notes that are full-bodied, rich and intense, pure and focused, ending with a long, complex, persistent finish. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2015. 800 cases made.

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

Rating: 94

Ruby with a bright rim. Wild, pungent aromas of spicy red and dark berries, olive, incense and fruitcake. Surprisingly lithe on the palate, conveying an almost pinot-like silkiness. Sweet black raspberry and kirsch flavors are brightened by dusty minerals, becoming livelier with aeration. A strikingly elegant, focused wine that finishes with outstanding tangy lift, cut and persistence. This was raised in 50% new barriques.

2005 BROKEN STONES

63% Syrah, 74% Grenache, 2% Mourvèdre
ALC: 15.5%
Cases 750 ml: 700
Released: February 2007
Release Price: \$45
Drink: now through 2015

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

This '05 Broken Stones is one of my favorites for sheer pleasure in drinking. It is very expressive in its purity of flavors and beautifully rounded. It is more approachable in its youth than the Bone Rock, but will benefit from a little bottle aging.

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #172, Aug 2007

Rating: 94+

Drink: 2007-2017

The 2005 Broken Stones, a blend of 74% Syrah, 24% Grenache, and the rest Mourvèdre, is a beauty. Notes of licorice, forest floor, pepper, spice box, and loads of black and red fruits jump from the glass as well as saturate the palate. This full-bodied, opulent wine has crisp acidity, some heady alcohol, and loads of flavor, depth, and richness. It is a savory wine to drink now and over the next 7-10 years.

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

Rating: 91

Ruby-red. Spicy boysenberry and kirsch on the nose, with subtle baking spice and musky underbrush adding complexity. Fleshy red and dark berry flavors are plump and sweet but reined in by zesty acidity, which enlivens the long, juicy finish. The spice notes linger impressively and contribute an impression of vivacity. But this needs some time in bottle.

2004 BROKEN STONES

75% Syrah, 22% Grenache, 3% Mourvèdre
ALC: 15.6%
Cases 750 ml: 600
Released: April 2006
Release Price: \$38
Drink: now through 2012

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

This wine is rich and dense, yet has a little more elegance and lift on the palate than previous vintages, in no small part due to the great Grenache coming out of the Heart Stone Vineyard. The Syrah from the Denner Vineyard had a great peppery quality to it in 2004, and the Syrah from the James Berry Vineyard was just plain explosive. All three vineyards are planted in extremely rocky outcrops that have a very high limestone content, giving this wine a degree of nerve and minerality not often seen in California wines, yet it is unmistakably from the sunshine state.

REVIEWS:

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Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #166, Aug 2006

Rating: 92

Drink: 2006-2016

The 2004 Broken Stones is a 600-case blend of 75% Syrah, 22% Grenache, and 3% Mourvèdre. Its deep ruby/purple color is followed by a sweet perfume of black cherries, cassis, and flowers. Medium to full-bodied and savory, with sweet tannin and a supple, approachable style, this fleshy, well-balanced red should age nicely for a decade or more.

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

Rating: 91

Good bright ruby. Highly complex, perfumed aromas of raspberry, blackberry, violet, bitter chocolate, tobacco, flowers, pepper and underbrush. Sweet and juicy, with a gentle texture and concentrated flavors of blackberry and dark chocolate. Very suave, silky wine, finishing with lush tannins and subtle length.

2003 BROKEN STONES

80% Syrah, 12% Grenache, 8% Mourvèdre

ALC: 15.3%

Cases 750 ml: 350

Release Price: \$38

Released: December 2005

Drink: now through 2013

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #159, Jun 2005

Rating: 95

Drink: 2005-2017

The 2003 Broken Stones, a 350-case blend of 80% Syrah, 12% Grenache, and 8% Mourvèdre, offers a fabulously sweet nose of black raspberries, blackberries, licorice, pepper, and subtle herbs, followed by pure, full-bodied flavors that coat the palate, but are neither heavy nor cloying. The oak component is virtually undetectable as it is concealed by the wine's wealth of fruit and extraordinary concentration. It should drink well for 10-12 years. 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, July/Aug 2005

Rating: 93

Bright medium ruby. Sappy, vibrant aromas of black cherry, blackberry, dark chocolate and licorice. Wonderfully dense and creamy, with sappy, fruit-driven flavors of dark berries, minerals and licorice. This has a silky, fine-grained texture rare for wines from this growing region. Finishes with sweet tannins, superb breadth and an impression of youthfulness. (A barrel sample of the young 2004 showed Cote-Rotie-like aromas and compelling sweetness and fat, while a super-cuvee made from the best ten barrels from Heart Stone Vineyard, the main source of the Broken Stones bottling, was even more explosive, offering

liqueur-like sweetness in conjunction with great perfume and lift, with added verve conferred by the 30% mourvedre component. Both of these wines have the potential to merit ratings in the 93-95 range.)

2002 BROKEN STONES

90% Syrah, 10% Grenache

ALC: 15.5%

Cases 750 ml: 275

Vineyard: James Berry Vineyard, Heart Stone Vineyard

Released: December 2004

Release Price: \$36

Drink: now through 2014

REVIEWS:

Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #154, Aug 2004

Rating: 96

Drink: 2004-2014

The 2002 Syrah Broken Stones (90% Syrah and 10% Grenache) spent 15 months in French oak. It was never racked prior to being bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Grown in rocky, limestone soils with a micro-climate influenced by the Templeton Gap, this riveting Syrah reveals incredible aromatics. Scents of kirsch liqueur intermixed with cassis, crushed rocks, and acacia flowers are followed by a wine of compelling intensity, a sumptuous texture, and a long, 60+ second finish. My notes read, "if this doesn't thrill you ... drink beer!" A truly profound offering, it should drink well over the next decade or more. 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

Rating: 88

Drink: now through 2009

Pushes ripeness to the optimum, with intense blackberry and wild berry flavors that border on raisiny. On the palate the flavors are intense and concentrated, with a touch of earth and leather that give it a dry aftertaste. Tasted three times, with one bottle showing a touch of balsamic. Drink now through 2009. 275 cases made.