

## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

### 2016 BROKEN STONES

52% Syrah, 18% Mataro, 10% Grenache, 10% Tempranillo, 8% Petite Sirah, 2% Roussanne

ALC: 15.9%

Cases 750 ml: 905

Cases 1.5 L: 55

Released: January 2019

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2021-2038

#### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2016 Broken Stones is definitely switching things up a little compared to the 2015. It's on the darker, more brooding side of things. Think wet stones on a hot day, maybe a little tar that you would find walking the beach of California, but then all this sweet black fruit kicks in. I really like the duality of it. We aged this baby in 51% new French Puncheons, but then the remainder was in large foudre or concrete amphora. This really allowed this Broken Stones to show its dark side, so to speak. I may be piling it on at this point, but it's one that I can't wait to taste with 5-10 years of age on it. I think it could stand up against the 2013 Stones and the 2007 Stones, but in the long race, the 2016 might come out on top!

Like I mentioned in my previous letter, 2016 is quite possibly the best vintage we have made. The stars aligned, and everything is just right. The perfect amount of fruit richness, the right amount of ripe tannins, the perfect amount of acidity, and incredible balance, all wrapped up with some nice freshness and aromatic intensity. We knew we had some great material right from the get go, and used a little less new oak than normal to let the explosive fruit and earthiness show itself properly. I am very happy with these wines!

#### REVIEWS:

**Jeb Dunnuck, [JebDunnuck.com](http://JebDunnuck.com)**

**Tasting Date: 8/10/2017**

**Rating: 96-100**

**Drink: n/a**

*More Syrah dominated than normal, the 2016 Broken Stones (51% Syrah, 17% Mourvèdre, 13% Grenache, 9% Tempranillo and the rest Petite Sirah and Roussanne, mostly destemmed ... is a big, badass wine that offers tons of black fruits, scorched earth, licorice and peppered meat. Thick, unctuous and seriously concentrated, it's another tour de force from Justin that just might be the best yet.*

*I've raved so much about the wines from Saxum's Justin Smith, I feel like a broken record every new vintage. Nevertheless, these latest vintages are all stellar, and certainly the move to the new cellar hasn't affect or changed the quality here. The 2014s show the richer, more fleshy style of the vintage, yet still carry the slightly more streamlined/elegant style that Smith has chosen over the past few years. The 2015s play even more in that realm, which is very much the vintage, and are lively and elegant, with pretty, perfumed characters – and plenty of fruit. The 2015s share a lot of similarities to the 2011s (which shined for their aromatics), yet have more fruit and power. It's worth noting that the majority had just been recently bottled, which makes these showings even more impressive. A vintage that*

*really excites me is the 2016s, which appear to be a return to a more bombastic style, with beautiful fruit and texture.*

**William Kelley, Wine Advocate, May 2018**

**Rating: 94-96+**

**Drink: NA**

*A blend of 52% Syrah, 18% Mataro, 10% Grenache, 10% Tempranillo, 8% Petite Sirah and 2% Roussanne, the 2016 Broken Stones (which will be bottled later this year) offers up brooding aromas of grilled meat and smoky black fruits. On the palate, it's full-bodied and very powerful, with sweet tannins, considerable concentration and chewy extract, and there's a long, stony finish. This cuvée used to see mainly new oak, but the 2016 is being matured in 51% new puncheons, 32% foudre and 13% amphora, with the balance in used wood. Perhaps that's why this vintage has all the power and amplitude that readers will have come to expect from Broken Stones but also more tension and precision.*

*Success sometimes breeds complacency, but that's emphatically not the case for Justin Smith, whose status as Paso Roble's most celebrated winemaker has done nothing to dim his urge to experiment, evolve and improve. Without sacrificing any of their power and authority, both of which come easily in this warm climate, Smith's Saxum wines continue to gain in structural refinement, energy, integration and incipient complexity with every passing vintage. Since the end of the last decade, Smith has been experimenting with whole cluster, a technique he tends to employ in cooler sites and vintages, since extracting excessive stem tannins is a danger in riper, warmer years. Fermentations are cooler and slower, which helps to manage extraction. While new oak was once an important influence in the Saxum wines, its presence is more and more subtle: Smith now works with puncheons instead of smaller barrels, and they're complemented by amphorae and foudres. Since 2010, he has employed Roussanne for co-fermentations with Syrah in the place of Viognier, since it brings less additional power and alcohol. He also continues to refine and adapt his blends from year to year. Smith's new cellar now means he has the space necessary to mature wines for longer. Today's Saxum wines are accordingly better than ever. The only problem is finding them: I signed up for the mailing list in 2011, and Smith informs me that the current wait is around eight years.*

*At Saxum, Smith characterizes the 2016 vintage as "easygoing and plentiful" after the challenges of the three preceding years of drought. The season's heat spikes weren't too serious, and fermentations went well. He employed less whole cluster than in 2015 but did very little crushing, emphasizing whole-berry fermentations. Having tasted most of these wines from barrel last summer, I was more than impressed by their positive evolution when I revisited them this April.*

**Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Sept 2018**

**Rating: 95-97**

**Drink: NA**

*Opaque purple. Expansive aromas of dark fruit liqueur, incense, vanilla, violet and spicecake are joined by olive and cola nuances that build in the background. Fleshy and broad in the mouth, offering deeply concentrated yet lively black and blue*

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*fruit preserve, star anise and violet pastille flavors brightened by a vibrant mineral flourish. Supple and appealingly sweet on the extremely long, floral-dominated finish, which is shaped by smooth, steadily building tannins.*

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### 2015 BROKEN STONES

48% Syrah, 21% Mourvèdre, 20% Grenache, 10% Petite Sirah, 1% Roussanne

ALC: 15.6%

Cases 750 ml: 1100

Cases 1.5 L: 100

Released: January 2018

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2019-2030

#### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

I'm still trying to wrap my mind around the 2015s. It was an anomaly of a vintage. First off, 2015 was the third consecutive drought year. The vineyards received abysmal rainfall and the vines were stressing. Due to the stress and unfavorable spring conditions, the vines set meager, and I mean MEAGER crop loads. Worst hit was the Syrah and Grenache, which unfortunately, is the bulk of what we produce. Anyways, enough belly aching over low yields.....back to the wines! The type of wine that you would expect to make from tiny yields and extended drought conditions would be massively concentrated behemoths. Thick, dark wines that you would have to smack the bottom of the bottle to get them to pour out. Surprisingly, we found the opposite type of wine when we started to press the young 2015s into barrel. Everyone stopped and scratched their heads. They are beautiful, nuanced wines! They possess the awesome spice of a cold vintage, like 2011, along with the sweet tannins of a cool, long growing season, like 2007. Hmmmmmmm, what is going on? Well, here's my theory, and if anybody else has one, let me know because I'm all ears. 2015 was an unusually humid summer, something we never see here in dry Paso Robles. A monsoonal weather pattern set up, possibly due to the warm El Niño waters off the Pacific, and it culminated in mid-July with a crazy lightning storm, dumping almost three inches of rain on us. Nobody had ever seen this. Even the old farmers who have been living here for close to 90 years! Now in the vineyard, it was too early to impact the fruit because the clusters hadn't begun to color up yet. But the storm seemed to rejuvenate the stressed out vines. They perked up and started to smile. Luckily, there weren't any more freak rain events for the rest of the season and harvest went super smooth. We were able to pick when we wanted to pick and ferment exactly the way we wanted to ferment. And oh, did I mention we had a brand stinking new winery to play with!? New fermentors, new equipment, and so much glorious space! (The new place is 6 times bigger than the garage of old.) We had the ability to put the fruit inside the precise fermentor size or type we thought best. (Wood, concrete, or stainless steel?) And, something new to us, we could leave it there as long as we wanted to because we now had enough fermentation space for every bit of fruit. No need to turn a tank like days of old! Anyways, I'm digressing again..... the wines! Downright beautiful (this is the word of the day). They are open and

aromatic, the tannins are soft and supple, they are layered and nuanced beyond all belief. They are already enjoyable. You can drink them while waiting for the 14s to come around. Probably even the 13s and 12s for that matter! On the other hand, I believe they will age magnificently. The balance is perfect.

**Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate Sept 2017**

**Rating: 97+**

**Drink: 2022-2031**

*Blended of 48% Syrah, 21% Mourvèdre, 20% Grenache, 10% Petite Sirah and 1% Roussanne, the 2015 Broken Stones displays a deep garnet-purple color and nose of freshly crushed black cherries and blueberries with touches of fertile loam, garrigue, mossy bark and rare beef. Full-bodied with wonderful vitality and purity, it has a firm backbone of grainy tannins and a very long, pepper-laced finish.*

**Josh Reynolds, Vinous Nov 2017**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2019-2035**

*Bright violet color. A flamboyantly perfumed bouquet evokes ripe black and blue fruits, vanilla, cured tobacco and incense, with a smoky mineral quality adding energetic lift. Palate-staining blueberry and cassis liqueur and fruitcake flavors deepen with air while maintaining impressive vibrancy and focus. Shows a velvety texture and becomes spicier on the urgent, spice-driven finish, which is framed by smooth, slow-building tannins.*

**Jeb Dunnuck, [JebDunnuck.com](http://JebDunnuck.com)**

**Tasting Date: 8/10/2017**

**Rating: 94-96**

**Drink: n/a**

*Brought up mostly in barrels (75% new French oak), with some in concrete, the 2015 Broken Stones (48% Syrah, 21% Mourvèdre, 20% Grenache, 10% Petite Sirah and a splash of Roussanne) is another seamless, seriously impressive wine. Blackberry, white pepper, spice and violets all emerge from this silky, full-bodied beauty that has tons of class. It will be the last year where the blend is more Grenache and Mourvèdre heavy, and in 2016, it's going back to a Syrah dominated cuvée. They've created a new Grenache cuvée from this block as well.*

*I've raved so much about the wines from Saxum's Justin Smith, I feel like a broken record every new vintage. Nevertheless, these latest vintages are all stellar, and certainly the move to the new cellar hasn't affect or changed the quality here. The 2014s show the richer, more fleshy style of the vintage, yet still carry the slightly more streamlined/elegant style that Smith has chosen over the past few years. The 2015s play even more in that realm, which is very much the vintage, and are lively and elegant, with pretty, perfumed characters – and plenty of fruit. The 2015s share a lot of similarities to the 2011s (which shined for their aromatics), yet have more fruit and power. It's worth noting that the majority had just been recently bottled, which makes these showings even more impressive. A vintage that really excites me is the 2016s, which appear to be a return to a more bombastic style, with beautiful fruit and texture.*

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## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

### 2014 BROKEN STONES

41% Syrah, 19% Grenache, 16% Petite Sirah,  
13% Mourvèdre, 8% Tempranillo, 3% Roussanne

ALC: 15.7%

Cases 750 ml: 1000

Cases 1.5 L: 100

Released: January 2017

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2019 - 2029+

#### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The growing season of 2014 was so dry that it is the defining feature of these wines. You can tell the vines struggled to squeeze every last drop of available moisture out of their bed of rocks that we like to call our soil. The wines are tightly wound and concentrated, but in a different way than the 2013s, more stoney is how I perceive them. Wet stones and chalk, minerality, spices, and then the core of fruit. The tannins are more refined, or transparent, than the monster tannins of '13 or '12. These wines remind me of the 2010s, which never had huge tannins, but have evolved very slowly, taking their damn sweet time to really strut their stuff. They should be ready to enjoy in a year or two but I think they will show best in a decade.

#### REVIEWS:

**Jeb Dunnuck, [JebDunnuck.com](http://JebDunnuck.com)**

**Tasting Date: 8/10/2017**

**Rating: 97**

**Drink: n/a**

*The 2014 Broken Stones is heavenly stuff! Made from a blend of 41% Syrah, 19% Grenache, 16% Petite Sirah, 13% Mourvèdre and the balance Tempranillo and Roussanne, this inky colored beauty offers terrific notes of mostly blue fruits (blackberries, blueberries), crushed violets, Asian spices and forest floor. Full-bodied, concentrated, elegant and seamless on the palate, it has a ripe tannin and a gorgeous finish. This is a fabulous wine to enjoy anytime over the coming decade.*

*I've raved so much about the wines from Saxum's Justin Smith, I feel like a broken record every new vintage. Nevertheless, these latest vintages are all stellar, and certainly the move to the new cellar hasn't affect or changed the quality here. The 2014s show the richer, more fleshy style of the vintage, yet still carry the slightly more streamlined/elegant style that Smith has chosen over the past few years. The 2015s play even more in that realm, which is very much the vintage, and are lively and elegant, with pretty, perfumed characters – and plenty of fruit. The 2015s share a lot of similarities to the 2011s (which shined for their aromatics), yet have more fruit and power. It's worth noting that the majority had just been recently bottled, which makes these showings even more impressive. A vintage that really excites me is the 2016s, which appear to be a return to a more bombastic style, with beautiful fruit and texture.*

**Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate Sept 2017**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2017-2029**

*Blended of 41% Syrah, 13% Mourvèdre, 19% Grenache, 16% Petite Sirah, 8% Tempranillo and 3% Roussanne, the 2014 Broken Stones has a deep garnet-purple color and exuberant*

*black and blue fruit notes with suggestions of raspberry pie, potpourri, spice cake and fallen leaves, plus a waft of chocolate box. Full-bodied and full-on gorgeous, it fills the palate with soft, sexy fruit and plush tannins, finishing on a spicy note.*

**Josh Reynolds, Vinous Nov 2017**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2022-2032**

*Brilliant violet color. Heady, mineral-accented aromas of raspberry liqueur, cherry-cola and potpourri, along with a bright mineral overtone that gains strength as the wine opens up. Offers juicy, densely packed red fruit preserve spicecake and floral pastille flavors that unfurl slowly. Shows a suave interplay of power and elegance, displaying velvety texture and firming mineral cut. An extremely long, sappy finish is shaped by smooth, sneaky tannins and features a lingering, exotic suggestion of Asian spices.*

**Tim Fish, Wine Spectator, Issue: 2018 Web Only**

**Rating: 92**

**Drink: 2019 through 2027**

*Precise yet rich in personality, offering a dense core of crushed-stone minerality and tannins, bound by expressive blueberry and dried cherry fruit, accented by licorice, dark chocolate and smoked pepper hints. Hands off for now. Syrah, Grenache, Petite Sirah, Mourvèdre, Tempranillo and Roussanne.*

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### 2013 BROKEN STONES

48% Syrah, 22% Petite Sirah, 17% Grenache, 6% Mourvèdre,  
4% Tempranillo, 3% Roussanne

ALC: 15.5%

Cases 750 ml: 1365

Cases 1.5 L: 100

Released: January 2016

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2018 - 2028+

#### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

You know how bullish I am on these 13s (I think about everyone is, actually), well, I haven't changed my tune since I wrote to you last. I am still really digging them. As always, these wines will need a few years of slumber, but they will reward you greatly. Juicy rich fruit, tons of sweet tannins, and incredible complexity. The depth is really what gets me going on them, ever changing layers that reveal new aspects of the wine with each sip. It definitely makes drinking them a joy.

#### REVIEWS:

**Jeb Dunnuck, Wine Advocate #226, Aug 2016**

**Rating: 96**

**Drink: 2018-2028**

*Incorporating more Petite Sirah than normal, and the first time there's been less than 50% Syrah, the 2013 Syrah Broken Stones is made from 48% Syrah, 22% Petite Sirah, 17% Grenache, 6% Mourvèdre the rest Tempranillo and Roussanne. Its deep, inky color is followed by a structured, seriously mineral-laced and full-bodied red that offers lots of fruit (cassis, black cherries and raspberries), smoked earth and chocolate*

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*aromas and flavors. The tannin is front and center, yet they're beautifully ripe and polished. Give bottles 2-3 years and enjoy through 2028*

*One of the superstars in California is undoubtedly the humble, soft spoken, yet incredibly talented Justin Smith, who has had the reins at Saxum since 2000. And while a lot of winemakers would have been content to stick with the tried and true at this point, Smith continues to question, experiment and fine tune everything he does. Today, his wines are much more finesse oriented, pure and graceful than in the past, without sacrificing texture, concentration or richness. In short, these wines kick ass and shouldn't be missed by any serious wine lover out there!*

**Tim Fish, Wine Spectator, Issue: March 31, 2017**

**Rating: 93**

**Drink: 2019 through 2028**

*A wine that's defined by density and rocky minerality, this is not for the faint of heart. Aromas of bitter chocolate and dark blueberry lead to complex licorice, smoky pepper and graphite flavors. Built for the cellar. Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Tempranillo and Roussanne.*

**Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Sept 2016**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2021-2029**

Dark purple. A heady, highly complex bouquet evokes ripe dark berries, cherry liqueur and sandalwood, while smoky mineral and Indian spice accents build in the glass. Seamless and strikingly concentrated, offering surprisingly lithe blueberry, cassis and violet pastille flavors that become spicier and sweeter with air. At once lush and elegant; finishes extremely long and sappy, delivering repeating blueberry and floral notes and velvety tannins.

Justin Smith has just begun settling into his new, expansive cellar, a series of connected tunnels burrowed out of the hill beneath his old winery and home that is equipped with a variety of concrete and wooden vats and barrels of varying sizes. Smith told me that he's now able to adapt his winemaking to whatever conditions nature hands him. Unsurprisingly, this was one of the finest sets of wines that I tasted during my trip this summer. A look through barrels and tanks of Smith's soon-to-be bottled 2014s and infant 2015s indicates that Saxum's winning streak shows no sign of letting up. Too bad that there simply won't be much wine to go around. Incidentally, while these will never be inexpensive wines, I find that prices are extremely fair given the sheer quality of the wines and the fact that they are among California's most sought-after bottlings.

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## 2012 BROKEN STONES

79% Syrah, 7% Petite Sirah, 7% Grenache, 5% Mourvèdre, 2% Roussanne

ALC: 15.6%

Cases 750 ml: 1010

Cases 1.5 L: 100

Released: January 2015

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2018 - 2028+

### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2012 vintage was the only normal season we have had in quite awhile. Not chilly like '10 and '11, not dry like '13 was or '14 will be. It was completely average. I don't mean that in a bad way either. I just mean we had an average amount of rainfall, an average temperature range, and an average crop-load. It was actually quite nice working with an average season. But what I have come to realize after farming here for, well, for a long time, is that average seasons are quite rare, and not normal at all! I always get a kick out of our European counterparts' misconception that California farming is so boring because every season is exactly the same. Au contraire! As for our spring release, we are offering the second half of our 2012 wines which are opening up beautifully. I popped the corks on all of them to do a little research for you (I know, the sacrifices I make!) and was shocked at just how much they have softened since the last time I tried them. They are starting to blossom! What perplexed me about this vintage was the tannin structure. It started out massive, and made me think that these wines were going to need years in the cellar before they began showing their stuff. I still think 3-5 years will greatly benefit the wines, but they will give great pleasure to those who can't hold out. I would drink the Heart Stone and maybe the Booker Vineyard first while you let the Broken Stones and Bone Rock slumber.

### REVIEWS:

**Jeb Dunnuck, Wine Advocate #220, Aug 2015**

**Rating: 97**

**Drink: 2017-2027**

The 2012 Syrah Broken Stones is a beauty. Made from 79% Syrah, 7% Petite Sirah and the rest Grenache, Mourvedre and Roussanne, it offers up full-bodied, decadent, yet incredibly pure notes of creme de cassis, smoked earth, pepper and violets. Seamless and silky, yet with a great mid-palate and notable tannin, it needs 2-3 years of bottle age and will have 15 years or more of overall longevity.

Needing no introduction for anyone that's followed the Wine Advocate or the wine scene in Paso Robles for any time in the past decade, Heather and Justin Smith's Saxum Vineyards continues to fashion sensational, world-class wines from a number of top sites on the west side of Paso Robles. While I reviewed most of the 2012s last year, I was thrilled to see the late releases this year, and even more thrilled to see that the tannic grip they showed last year had integrated beautifully. These are great 2012s that will still benefit from short-term cellaring and age beautifully. Moving to the 2013s, this is a vintage Justin classified as a "classic" and I think it's safe to say he was thrilled with the wines. These have more density and

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richness than the 2012s, with more sweetness to the tannin, yet also the pretty, classy and lively profile that's the hallmark of the vintage. They'll be more approachable than the 2012s but still have 15-20 years of longevity. While Justin opted to not bottle any Rocket Block in 2012 (this is still a little up in the air), I think 2013 might be the year we actually see this tiny block of Grenache make it into a bottle. Smith is without a doubt one of the great winemakers of California.

**James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2015**  
**Rating: 92**

**Drink: 2016-2028**

A tour de force that's dense, powerful and chunky, with a rich, extracted core of dark berry, graphite, crushed rock, tar and cedar notes. Gripping but engaging on the finish. Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, Mourvèdre and Roussanne.

**Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Sept 2015**  
**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2020-2027**

Saturated purple. Spectacular perfume of fresh blueberry, boysenberry, incense, vanilla and smoky minerals, with suave allspice and star anise nuances coming up as the wine stretches out. Sweet, incisive and pure on the palate, offering an array of dark fruit liqueur and floral pastille flavors, along with suggestions of cola and spicecake. Leaves sexy lavender and blue fruit notes behind on an extremely long, vibrant finish that's firmed and focused by silky, fully integrated tannins.

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### 2011 BROKEN STONES

78% Syrah, 18% Mourvèdre, 4% Petite Sirah

ALC: 15.6%

Cases 750 ml: 1150

Cases 1.5 L: 80

Released: January 2014

Release Price: \$89

Drink: now - 2026+

#### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2011 growing season was an extremely cool year for us. Not a single day was over 100° the whole season, which we have never experienced before. Normally a cool season might be a disaster for the late ripening Rhone varieties we grow, but, and this is why I am so blessed to be a grape grower on the Central Coast of California, the weather was mild and without rain that Fall. When the end of October rolled around in 2011 and most of our fruit was still on the vine, I was more than a little worried to say the least! It is not uncommon to get some rain in late October, and since we hadn't even started to pick, I had reason to be fearful. Thankfully the mild weather held perfectly and we were able to harvest fully mature fruit throughout November. Yes, November! Most of our fruit came in between Halloween and Thanksgiving, very crazy. So what does this mean for the wine that resulted from the extremely cool, late season? Well, it is a little lighter in color, but still quite dark, and a little lower in alcohol, but still comparatively weighty. The aromatics are what I find magical on this set of wines, the cool temperatures kept them amazingly fresh and ethereal. Definitely

on the spice side as opposed to the fruit aspect that we normally see more of in a warmer year. In the cellar I tried to respect this character of the 2011 vintage. We used a little more whole cluster fermentation to soften the tannins and increase the spiciness and we cut down on the amount of new oak we would normally use to let the spice shine through even more. We also increased the amount of concrete aging vessels we use to really bring it all home with an exclamation point! I really like them, and I think they will be fascinating wines to follow over the next 20 years.

#### REVIEWS:

**Jeb Dunnuck, Wine Advocate #214, Aug 2014**

**Rating: 96**

**Drink: 2014-2029**

The brilliant 2011 Syrah Broken Stones comes from a cooler block of the James Berry Vineyard and checks in as a blend of 78% Syrah, 18% Mourvedre and 4% Petit Sirah. Relatively forward (especially when compared to the locked up Bone Rock), with fabulous purity and freshness, it exudes notions of creme de cassis, blueberry, pepper, crushed flowers and sweet oak on the nose. Full-bodied, seamless and elegant, yet with building richness and rock star length, it's an elegant version of the cuvee to drink over the coming 15 years or more. This was another great visit with Justin Smith, and he continues to tweak and experiment with varying degrees of whole cluster and concrete, puncheon and barrel aging regimes. Looking at his 2011s, I was able to taste all of these from bottles in Colorado, and they've closed down substantially since I reviewed them from barrel. In most cases, these took a day or more to fully unwind, and the style here is much more Rhoneliike, with spice, pepper and meaty aromatics paired with focused, firm palate profiles. These are gorgeous wine that won't start to show their full potential for another 3-4 years. The 2012s are just as good, if not better, yet are surprisingly tannic and structured. Given the up-front nature of the vintage, I was surprised by the tannin profile and more reserved style in most of the wines. Nevertheless, the concentration level here is on par with, if not slightly greater than, the 2011s, and they show the fabulous purity and focus of the vintage. Both of these vintages will need short-term cellaring. My favorite of the three vintages reviewed here, the 2013s offer thrilling density of fruit, massive concentration, and sound underlying structure that keeps the wines focused and balanced. I think short-term cellaring will be helpful here as well, but I wouldn't be afraid to crack a bottle or two on release either. Despite these vintage differences, as I hope the reviews and scores show, these are incredible wines that make the most of this special terroir. Truthfully, there are few mailing lists out there worth being on, but without a doubt, this is one of them.

**James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2014**

**Rating: 88**

**Drink: now through 2024**

Trim and tannic, with a narrow mix of dried berry and loamy earth flavors, this wine will benefit from some short-term cellaring. The cool-weather, savory flavors are framed by dry, gripping tannins. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2024.

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**Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar  
Nov/Dec 2013**

**Rating: 94**

Inky purple. Sexy aromas of blackberry liqueur, candied cherry, potpourri and a hint of olive tapenade. Offers sweet black and blue fruit flavors and a velvety texture, with slow-building smokiness and a touch of bitter chocolate. Fine-grained tannins add shape and grip to a long, juicy, dark fruit-dominated finish. This suave wine easily carries its 15.3% alcohol.

**Antonio Galloni, Vinous Aug 2014**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2015-2023**

A dark, mysterious beauty, the 2011 Broken Stones is laced with expressive dark red and black stone fruits, iron, smoke and French oak. This is one of the more explosive wines in Saxum's range of 2011s. The Broken Stones finishes with substantial depth and power. While oak levels have come down quite a bit here in recent years, Broken Stones is one wine in this range where the oak influence is noticeable. The blend is 78% Syrah, 18% Mourvèdre and 4% Petite Sirah.

Proprietor Justin Smith has done a magnificent job with his 2011s. Now that the wines are in bottle, they are every bit as impressive as they were from barrel. Readers who can still find the 2011s should not hesitate, as they are magnificent.

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### 2010 BROKEN STONES

63% Syrah, 19% Mourvèdre, 15% Grenache, 3% Petite Sirah

ALC: 15.3%

Cases 750 ml: 1380

Cases 1.5 L: 120

Released: January 2013

Release Price: \$89

Drink: now - 2025

#### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

I am really enjoying the wines from the 2010 growing season. It was an incredibly cool season (the coolest we had ever experienced until 2011 came along!). This allowed for some great hang time, which leads to great flavor and tannin development. October and November were ideal, dry and not too chilly, amazingly, everything ripened beautifully. (I was very panicked we would get an October storm like we did in 2009.) In the end, we were able to bring in some incredibly complex but intense fruit that was a pleasure to work with in the cellar. Speaking of the cellar, in 2010 we purchased a whole slew of concrete fermentors and were extremely happy with how well they turned our fruit into wine. I am sold on concrete as a fermentation vessel. The concrete definitely helped in softening up the prodigious tannins of 2010 and allowed us to keep the wines fresher and more focused. It is a lovely combination.

#### REVIEWS:

**Antonio Galloni, Wine Advocate #202, Aug 2012**

**Rating: 92-94**

**Drink: 2013-2020**

A rush of dark Syrah fruit announces the 2010 Broken Stones.

Menthol, tar and sweet spices develop with time in the glass, adding considerable complexity and nuance. This is a seriously rich, intense wine endowed with deep layers of fruit and a huge, muscular finish. Here, too, I sense the wine is a bit tight, but it should be ready to go in another 6 months or so. The blend is 63% Syrah, 19% Mourvedre, 15% Grenache and 3% Petite Sirah. Anticipated maturity: 2013-2020.

I have been looking forward to tasting the Saxum 2010s since I saw several component wines from barrel last year. Justin and Heather Smith, along with Eric Jensen at Booker, Matt Trevisan and Linne-Calodo, Cris Cherry at Villa Creek and a handful of other growers, represent the cutting edge of the adventurous, pioneering spirit that is the essence of Paso Robles, and also in many ways, the heart of what makes the United States a great country. Take it from someone who spends a lot of time in Europe every year, this level of ambition is rare in the world. Saxum fans will be thrilled to learn that with the 2010 vintage Justin and Heather Smith have introduced a new wine to their lineup, the Syrah-based Terry Hoage Vineyard. For the last few years, Hoage fruit has found its way into the Bone Rock, but 2010 is the first year the Smiths had enough fruit to warrant a separate bottling. Justin Smith describes 2010 as the coldest year he had ever seen, until 2011. Although 2010 was a cold year, Smith says he still got the ripeness levels he looks for, it just took a lot more time because the growing season turned out to be very long. In 2011, however, ripeness levels never reached the typical range here, and consequently the wines are all about 1% lower in alcohol. The 2010 vintage also signals a bit of a stylistic shift at Saxum. Concrete tanks were first introduced with the 2009 vintage, but in 2010 about 50% of the fruit was fermented in concrete, while the Grenache for the James Berry Vineyard bottling was vinified and aged partly in concrete. In 2011, Smith added one more concrete tank, for the Heart Stone, the first Saxum wine to be vinified and aged exclusively in concrete. The 2010 Terry Hoage, Paderewski and James Berry were bottled in late May 2012, while the remainder of the wines were scheduled to be bottled in August 2012.

**James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2012**

**Rating: 93**

**Drink: now through 2024**

Deceptively understated, with a profile of crushed rock and mineral joined by dark berry, spice, and a beefy note on the finish. Firmly tannic. Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2024.

**Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar  
Nov/Dec 2012**

**Rating: 94**

A complex, smoky bouquet evokes red and dark berry liqueur, candied flowers and Asian spices. Supple and juicy on the palate, with zesty acidity giving spine and lift to the powerful black raspberry and mulberry flavors. The smoky note comes back on the strikingly long, mineral-driven finish, which is focused, sweet and extremely long.

**Jebb Dunnuck, The Rhone Report**

**Rating: 96**

Even more perfumed and up front aromatically, the 2010 Saxum Broken Stones is a brilliant effort. A multi-vineyard blend... that

## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

was aged mostly in new French oak, it offers up a gorgeously pure array of black raspberry, charcoal, licorice, lavender, and assorted floral qualities on the nose. This flows to a full-bodied, deft, and elegant palate that has no hard edges, a weightless feel, and masses of fine, yet firm tannin on the finish. Give bottles another year or three, and then drink over the following 12-15 years.

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### 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 singlevineyard

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.

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## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

### 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 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.

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### 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



## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

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**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 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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

## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

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:

**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.)

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### 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.