

SAXUM JAMES BERRY VINEYARD WHITE

2018 JAMES BERRY VINEYARD WHITE

66% Grenache Blanc, 28% Roussanne, 6% Chenin Blanc
ALC: 14.9%

Cases 750 ml: 317

Vineyard: James Berry Vineyard

Release: January 2021

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

I'm really having fun making this wine. It was a long haul as I mentally prepared myself for the task of making a white... but I must say I am very happy with the outcome. We are producing a white that I am proud of. It is rich and textured, but not blowzy, because it has great acid. There is nice structure from the barrel fermentation, but because we utilize large 600L barrels with very light toast, it does not come across as oaky. I will let Josh and Jeb get into the descriptors for you, but I feel like a proud Papa when it comes to this wine.

The 2018s are some of the most complex and nuanced wines we have ever released (and will definitely benefit from 3-30 years of aging.) Structured and built like a brick, while at the same time the copious tannins are coming together nicely. I really dig them. To be honest, I was a little scared when I tasted them last. They were so tightly focused and intense. Now I'm seeing how quickly they have softened up, coming out of their proverbial shells. I know it's cliché, but iron fist in a velvet glove suits them well. I have previously compared the 2018s to the 2016s, but now that I've had some time to get to know both vintages I find them to be less similar than I first thought... I think '18 might be better. Yes, you heard it here first. Our '18s might be better than the much regaled '16s. (And I'm not just saying that because I'm slinging them today!) I think the '16s may be a bit more generous and forthcoming, but the '18s will outshine the '16s in their complexity. I'm looking forward to some side by side comparisons in 5 or 6 years. It shall be a momentous battle!

REVIEWS:

Jeb Dunnuck, Sept 2020

Rating: 97

Drink: na

The 2018 James Berry Vineyard White is straight-up stunning stuff and showed even better from bottle than barrel. Based on 66% Grenache Blanc, 28% Roussanne, and – wait for it – 6% Chenin Blanc, it boasts a medium gold hue as well as a rocking nose of caramelized citrus, apricots, honeyed flowers, and toasted bread. Rich, full-bodied, and concentrated, it has a terrific sense of freshness, flawless balance, and a great, great finish. It's up with the finest whites I've tasted from Paso Robles and will easily stand up to anything coming out of the Rhône Valley today!

Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Dec. 2020

Rating: 96

Drink: 2022-2029

Light, slightly hazy yellow. Vibrant, mineral-accented pear, Meyer lemon and yellow plum scents take on anise and chamomile nuances with air. Taut and chewy in texture, offering densely packed orchard and pit fruit flavors that are braced by a potent mineral undercurrent and a refreshingly bitter lemon pith

accent. Finishes minerally, tight and extremely long, leaving citrus pith and floral notes behind.

Erin Brooks, Wine Advocate, Jan 2021

Rating: 96

Drink: 2020-2030

The 2018 James Berry Vineyard White is made up of 66% Grenache Blanc, 28% Roussanne and 6% Chenin Blanc. The nose is warm and toasty, with loads of golden fruits accented by beeswax, dried chamomile and salted almonds. The palate is expertly structured, its weightless, silken texture belying its concentrated, savory fruits, and it finishes extraordinarily long, lifted and fresh. I love the energy and fullness of flavor this 2018 offers!

I've been eagerly anticipating the 2018 vintage in Paso Robles, where cooler temperatures resulted in some unusually elegant, lifted wines. The 2018s from Saxum did not disappoint—these latest releases offer incredible concentration of flavor with surprising elegance and freshness. While they took some time in bottle to unwind, I'm pleased with how they have blossomed over time. These layered, nuanced wines have the intense flavor, ripe tannins and freshness for long-term cellaring, and while they're stunning now, they'll offer more a few years down the road. Cheers!

2017 JAMES BERRY VINEYARD WHITE

55% Grenache Blanc, 32% Roussanne, 8% Chenin Blanc, 5% Petit Manseng

ALC: 15.1%

Cases 750 ml: 312

Vineyard: James Berry Vineyard

Released: January 2020

Release Price: \$98

Drink: now - 2030

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The James Berry White. This wine was a long time coming! I've been wanting to make a white for many years, but wanted to make it perfect, and I knew in the old Saxum facility we didn't have the space or right equipment to do our fruit justice. We have had Roussanne planted here since 1997, but I wanted to bring in some extra brightness that Roussanne can often lack, so I planted some Grenache Blanc on an East facing section of the Rocket Block hill. My hunch paid off, and the combo of the rich waxy Roussanne is cut and lifted with some bright citrusy Grenache Blanc. We wanted this wine to have some structure and age ability like a classic White Burgundy, but with a California twist. We pressed straight to barrels, a combination of 320L hogsheads and 600L demi-muids, all new French except one used 600L (from Dageuneau no less!). The juice was barrel fermented and left on its lees with occasional lees stirring for the entire 20 months. This wine did not see any SO2 until it was racked to tank for bottling, unfiltered and unfiltered of course. What emerged is a seriously structured yet complexly aromatic white. More flint and mineral on the nose than you might expect from a California white, but the mouthfeel is rich and focused at

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the same time. I'm quite happy with it. Like Saxum reds, it will greatly benefit a couple years of aging, more if you have the patience.

During the 2017 growing season California was served an impressive heat wave that arrived at the wrong time, when the fruit was getting close, but definitely not there yet. We were faced with two options. Our first option was to pick the fruit that was starting to shrivel from the heat. Fruit with numbers saying the sugars were getting too high, acids were too strong, and tannins were too green. The second option was to let it ride. However, you can't predict the weather and could potentially lose the whole crop. A huge gamble. Well, we rolled the dice and let everything hang. Then we proceeded to bite our nails and watch the weather. Eventually the heat stopped and we ended up losing a portion of our crop, maybe 15%, but the remaining 85% was awesome. We had to spend a lot of time on the sorting table removing the damaged portions of the clusters, but it was all worthwhile. The wines are delicious! The 2017s definitely have a riper aromatic than the 2016s, but I rather enjoy that. The tannins are incredibly soft and smooth, making them very open and approachable in their youth. I like to think that the 2016s will ultimately be the better wines, but for the first 5, maybe 8 years of their lives, the 2017s might bring more pleasure, and bringing pleasure is what this is all about!!!

REVIEWS:

Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Dec. 2020

Rating: 94

Drink: 2022-2030

Glistening straw-yellow. Intensely perfumed pear, lemon pith, white flowers and succulent herb aromas pick up a chalky mineral element with air. Chewy and tightly focused on the palate, offering concentrated, mineral-laced citrus and orchard fruit and honeysuckle flavors that show superb clarity and spicy back-end cut. Finishes on a sappy pear nectar note, showing sharp delineation and superb, floral-driven tenacity.

Jeb Dunnuck, Oct 2019

Rating: 93

Drink: na

Starting with the white from one of the unquestionably great estates in wine today, the 2017 James Berry Vineyard White offers a concentrated, richer style as well as classy notes of caramelized tangerines, toasted spice, orange blossom, and brioche. I love its texture and richness, and it's beautifully balanced.

Saxum's Justin Smith has hit a home run with these recent vintages, and his 2015s, 2016s, 2017s, and 2018s all have singular styles, with the quality remaining sky-high. The 2018s show the slightly more pure, fresh, yet concentrated style of the vintage nicely. While not yet bottled, these will offer pleasure in their youth as well as benefit from short term cellaring. The 2017s are more pretty, perfumed wines that don't quite have the density of the 2016s yet certainly don't lack for fruit. Most are already drinking nicely today, yet as with all great wines, they're going to evolve gracefully. Lastly, the 2016s are some of the greatest wines I've tasted from this estate, and they offer massive, layered, yet impeccably balanced profiles that are a

joy to drink today; they'll also be a joy to drink in 10-15 years as well. As I've written more than once, there are few mailing lists worth being on, but without a doubt, this is one of them.

Erin Books Wine Advocate Feb 2020

Rating: 91

Drink: 2020-2024

The 2017 James Berry Vineyard White, the first vintage of this wine, is made up of 55% Grenache Blanc, 32% Roussanne, 8% Chenin Blanc and 5% Petit Manseng aged 21 months in 80% new oak. The nose gives warm Golden Delicious apples, quince and poached pear with a hint of baker's yeast and honey-nut touches. Medium-bodied, it's fresh and pure in the mouth with a lifted, honeyed finish.