

SAXUM PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

2021 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

48% Syrah, 19% Mataro, 17% Zinfandel, 9% Tempranillo, 7% Graciano

ALC: 15.5%

Cases 750 ml: 419

Cases 1.5 L: 60

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: July 2023

Release Price: \$135

Drink: now - 2042

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Classic Paderewski, with its round supple tannins and crushed red fruit aromatics. There's just something that makes this vineyard always come through in its profile that is hard to describe, so I tend to just think of it as "Paderewskiness". For those that are fans of this bottling, you are going to love this version. It was brought up partially in used foudre (oak casks), so hardly any new oak influence.

2021 was a relatively cool year for us. Not quite as cool as 2010 or 2011, but definitely the mildest season we had seen in awhile. What makes this vintage interesting is that it was a dry season which gave the wines a different profile than the wetter years like 2019 or 2017. So what I'm getting at is it's a pretty unique vintage. Probably one that comes fairly close to resembling the 2007 vintage. (I'm sure you all like hearing that!) It's fresh, lifted and focused like you would expect in a cooler year, but has great concentration and texture from the dry weather. I'm happy to say the tannins are really soft and supple so I think it is a vintage that is versatile. Enjoyable in its youth (2-3 years after release, let's not be hasty here!), but will age out very gracefully, with a long life ahead of it.

Jeb Dunnuck, July 2023 Sneak Peek

Rating: (97)

Drink: 2024 - 2036

...it's a brilliant bottle of wine, offering loads of ripe, purple fruits, flowers, Jolly Rancher candy, and pepper. It's full-bodied, has a rounded, sexy, opulent mouthfeel, and one heck of a finish. As satisfying as they come, its upfront, hedonistic style is balanced beautifully by the cooler, elegant style of the 2021 vintage. It's up there with the finest vintages of this cuvée and will put a smile on your face any time over the coming 10-15 years or so.

2020 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

48% Syrah, 21% Mataro, 18% Zinfandel, 7% Graciano, 6% Tempranillo

ALC: 15.2%

Cases 750 ml: 655

Cases 1.5 L: 60

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: July 2022

Release Price: \$132

Drink: now - 2042

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Classic Rewski here. Blue fruits, chalky tannins. Complex lingering finish. Just begs for some BBQ. I'm getting hungry..... I think I know what I'm going to make tonight!

I'm sure many of you have heard the woes of 2020. Fires devastated the entire West Coast of the U.S. Nobody was spared, but fortunately the vineyards of Paso were not hit too hard. The closest fire to us was up in Monterey County, which is about 90 miles north. Nonetheless, we approached the 2020 vintage very carefully in the cellar by running every possible type of analysis to detect damage from the smoke that was occasionally thick in the air that summer. Although a couple of the lots were suspect, everything else was clean. Phew!

Jeb Dunnuck, Sept 2022

Rating: 93-95

Drink: n/a

The 2020 Paderewski Vineyard checks in as 57% Syrah, 13% Graciano, and the rest Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah, and Zinfandel. This beauty brings lots of sweet fruit as well as complex notes of smoked herbs, pepper, licorice, and chocolate. It's balanced, has quality tannins and tons of character, and really shows the spicy, complex style of this site as well.

I was able to taste three vintages from Saxum, the late release 2019s from bottle, the majority of the 2020 lineup from barrel, and a handful of 2021 barrel samples. As I wrote last year, the 2019s are just brilliant, ripe, hedonistic, magical wines, and these late releases only reinforce that opinion. Looking at the 2020s, this is clearly a challenging vintage, with many wines having subtle smoky nuances and firmer yet still ripe tannins. Justin commented that the lab numbers regarding smoke taint were very low, so I think these are safe wines that will offer plenty of pleasure, although this is not a vintage to hide in the cellar. The 2021s that I was able to taste were terrific, and this will clearly be another terrific vintage here. In addition, they've planted a new vineyard located just four miles off the Pacific, the Cayucos Ridge Vineyard, and I expect we'll see more releases from that site in the future.

Jeb Dunnuck, July 2022

Rating: 93-95

Drink: n/a

...while 2020 was a challenging vintage for Paso Robles due to heat spikes and smoke, the wines are unquestionably outstanding, as well as some of the best in the vintage.

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2019 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

53% Syrah, 18% Mataro, 11% Zinfandel, 8% Graciano, 7% Tempranillo, 3% Viognier

ALC: 15.8%

Cases 750 ml: 715

Cases 1.5 L: 50

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: July 2021

Release Price: \$98

Drink: now - 2042

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Can I really lead off each review with "This is my favorite (fill in the blank) I've ever made!"? Yes I can. Best Rewski yet. And yes that 3% Viognier does make a huge difference! If you like our Paderewski Vineyard, you will not be disappointed with this wine.

We have finally bottled up some of our amazing 2019s. I say finally because this year it was quite an ordeal to import the glass from Italy due to ports that are completely jammed up. After waiting a few extra weeks we received our fancy new embossed bottles. They look pretty sweet, if I do say so myself, but worth the hassle? Yes it was. They are SEXY. Speaking of sexy, have we talked about the 2019s yet? This vintage has really taken me by surprise. I admit that early on I was not overly excited by the 19s. I thought they were over shadowed by the showy, dark, intense 2018s. But these 19s are like a slow burn that just keeps building and building. Every time I tasted them as they aged in barrel they have become better and better. At this point I would rank this vintage right up there in the top 3 vintages. What I love about them is that they have a bit of everything. Spice? Check! Rich fruit? Check! Smooth, mouth coating tannins? Check, check and check! Not only does this vintage have a lot going on, it is also approachable in its youth. Like the 2017s were/are. Here's the 19s.... approachable tannins like the 17s, spice like the 11s, intensity like the 07s and 09s, and beautiful aromatics like the 15s. Best of all the worlds? Maybe!?!

Josh Reynolds, Vinous, July 2022

Rating: 97

Drink: 2026-2036

Saturated magenta. Highly perfumed, spice-accented red and blue fruits, botanical herbs, incense, potpourri and a hint of smokiness on the nose. Displays vibrant, spice-tinged blueberry, cherry cola, cassis and exotic spice flavors and seamless texture. Turns firmer and echoes the spice and floral notes on the strikingly persistent finish, which features harmonious tannins and lingering blue fruit character.

At the risk of sounding like a skipping record, Justin Smith has, again, produced the strongest set of releases this year from Paso Robles. Yes, there's plenty of competition out there, and the numbers grow every year, but the Saxum 2019s sit at the top of the vintage hierarchy yet again. Smith is constantly refining his winemaking techniques, with particular focus on how the wines are raised in his hillside tunnels. Concrete tanks and eggs as well as oak vessels of varying age, shape and size all come into play here, to consistently stunning results. This set of

bottlings show the elegance of the vintage, combined with the depth and intensity of flavor that has long been the Saxum trademark. They should age effortlessly, like their outstanding 2018 siblings, a few of which were or are being released alongside the 2019s. A 222-acre property in the York Mountain AVA is now part of Saxum's holdings and planting is under way, so expect lots more activity here in the coming years.

2018 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

44% Syrah, 22% Mataro, 15% Zinfandel, 9% Grenache, 6% Tempranillo, 4% Viognier

ALC: 15.6%

Cases 750 ml: 659

Cases 1.5 L: 50

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: July 2020

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2022-2040

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Doing these write ups is really hard for me because each wine I come to I want to say "wow, this is the most awesome wine ever!" and I know I can't because, well, they can't all be the most awesome wine ever, but this '18 Paderewski just might be the best 'Rew we have ever made. This wine strikes the perfect balance of expressing what Paso wines are all about. An unconventional blend that has Rhone, Spanish, and California varietals all together in what could only come from the Willow Creek District of Paso Robles. Viva California!

2018 was a perfectly normal vintage, and I don't mean that in a negative way. In farming, you want things to be normal. No crazy droughts or floods (here in Paso at least), not super cool or crazy hot, just nice and even. Letting us decide when to pick the fruit and what crop load we want the vines to have. We make the calls as opposed to mother nature making the calls for us. It produces a vintage that is strictly ours to mess up..... and we didn't. We nailed it. The 2018 vintage is very similar to the 2016s. Deep, dark, and structured, but still plenty of ripe tannins. It is another vintage that is really going to benefit from laying down for a handful of years. Drink those '17s before you drink these '18s (except for the 17 Rocket Block, hold that baby indefinitely). These '18s show tons of promise, you just need to be patient with them.

Jeb Dunnuck, Sept 2020

Rating: 97

Drink: 2020-2036

Bottled in April (as were all the early release 2018s), the 2018 Paderewski Vineyard is 44% Syrah, 22% Mataro, 15% Zinfandel, 9% Grenache, and the rest Tempranillo and Viognier. Deep purple, it has a wonderful bouquet of blueberries, wild strawberries, ground pepper, orange blossom, licorice, and violets. Beautifully textured, full-bodied, and both rich and elegant, it's a stunning wine to enjoy over the coming 15 years or more.

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Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Dec 2020

Rating: 97

Drink: 2026-2036

Opaque ruby. Expressive spice- and mineral-accented aromas of black raspberry, boysenberry, cherry cola and candied licorice take on a suave floral overtone with air. Sappy, penetrating red/blue fruit liqueur and violet pastille flavors show excellent depth and energy, while an undercurrent of zesty acidity provides support and vibrancy. Fine-grained, building tannins lend grip to the impressively long finish, which leaves sweet blue fruit and a repeating mineral flourish behind.

Justin Smith's contribution to the success of Paso Robles and the status of its wines cannot be overstated. His Saxum wines are the most sought-after of the region, so expectations are always high when approaching a bottle, and it's always a pleasure to see results live up to or surpass reputation. That was emphatically the case this year, as this was one of the most successful lineups of wines that I have ever tasted, from anywhere. Longtime followers of these wines, lucky bastards that they are, know how uncanny they are for their ability to play depth and power off energy and finesse, and that's crystal-clear in 2018 and even the hot 2017 vintage. The extended growing season of 2018 helped the wines retain freshness while developing concentration, which any winegrower will tell you is the Holy Grail of their craft. In 2017 the heat of the growing season here on Paso Robles' limestone-soil-dominated west side was mitigated by the usual diurnal temperature shifts and, of course, skilled blending in the cellar helped immeasurably. While Saxum's wines command lofty prices on the secondary market, it should be noted that ex-cellar pricing remains extremely fair for such a sought-after producer.

Erin Brooks, Wine Advocate, Feb 2020

Rating: 95

Drink: 2020-2035

The 2018 Paderewski Vineyard is a blend of 44% Syrah, 22% Mataro, 15% Zinfandel, 9% Grenache, 6% Tempranillo and 4% Viognier. Purple-black in color, it explodes to violet and lilac perfume with a core of black and blue pie fruits, sweet spices and aniseed. The full-bodied palate explodes with perfumed fruits, supported by very firm, ripe tannins, and it has a good juicy uplift on the long finish.

2017 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

43% Syrah, 25% Mataro, 10% Zinfandel, 9% Petite Sirah, 9% Tempranillo, 4% Viognier

ALC: 16.1%

Cases 750 ml: 640

Cases 1.5 L: 50

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: July 2019

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2022-2038

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

In 2017 the Paderewski Vineyard reverted back to being Syrah dominant, but it's really an ensemble cast. This site continues

to increase in strength with each vintage. The tannins were so soft from the get go that we decided to age a large portion of the wine in a large oak foudre, letting the vineyard speak of its rocky calcareous site. There's a great minerality that runs through it, holding all that unctuous fruit in check.

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:

Jeb Dunnuck, Oct 2019

Rating: 95+

Drink: after 2022

Brought up in half new barrels, the 2017 Paderewski Vineyard has closed down substantially since I tasted it from barrel and is a big, rich, chewy effort as well as one of the more structured and tannic wines in the lineup. Loads of blueberry and mulberry fruits as well as notes of ground pepper, herbs, and graphite give way to a full-bodied 2017 that has good acidity, a more tight, backward feel on the palate, and a great finish. Hide bottles for 2-3 years.

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.

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Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Dec 2020

Rating: 97

Drink: 2027-2037

Opaque ruby. Powerful, deeply pitched black and blue fruit, candied licorice, violet pastille and fruitcake flavors are braced by a spine of juicy acidity and a hint of smoky minerals. Stains the palate with densely packed cassis, bitter cherry and blueberry flavors that pick up exotic spice, cola and dark chocolate on the back half. This deeply concentrated wine shows remarkable clarity and liveness for its richness and finishes extremely long and spicy, with a resonating floral note and chewy, steadily building tannins.

Erin Brooks, Wine Advocate, Feb 2020

Rating: 94

Drink: 2020-2035

The 2017 Paderewski Vineyard, owned by Epoch, is a blend of 43% Syrah, 25% Mataro, 10% Zinfandel, 9% Petite Sirah, 9% Tempranillo and 4% Viognier. It was made with 31% whole cluster and aged 19 months in 55% new oak. Medium to deep ruby in color, it's scented of red and black currants, cranberry jelly, turned earth, grilled game meats and dried herbs. The medium to full-bodied palate is plush, lushly fruited and intense with lip-smacking freshness and a long finish.

Tim Fish, Wine Spectator

Producer Spotlight, Dec. 18, 2019

Rating: 93

Drink: 2019 through 2030

Deeply structured and brimming with personality, this blend expresses blackberry, licorice, grilled meat and savory pepper notes, building density and power toward broad-shouldered tannins. Syrah, Mataro, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Tempranillo and Viognier.

Since the brand's first vintage in 2000, Saxum has set the standard for Rhône-style reds in California, with numerous appearances on Wine Spectator's Top 100 list, including the No. 1 spot in 2010 with the Saxum James Berry Vineyard Paso Robles 2007. Owner-winemaker Justin Smith (pictured at right) grew up in Paso Robles, located halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, and his father planted the 55-acre James Berry Vineyard in the early 1980s. The core of Saxum's production, James Berry Vineyard is about 10 miles from the Pacific, planted atop an ancient seabed scattered with fossilized shells and shark teeth. The latest James Berry Vineyard Willow Creek District 2017, a potent yet detailed blend, was previously featured in the Insider with a 95-point rating.

As you can see from this collection, Smith makes wine from a range of nearby vineyards, including Booker, Paderewski and Terry Hoage. Smith uses a variety of winemaking approaches, depending on the bottling and vintage, with fermentation vessels that range from concrete to large French oak puncheons, emphasizing the unique qualities of each grape and vineyard.

2016 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

46% Mataro, 19% Syrah, 15% Tempranillo, 8% Petite Sirah, 7% Zinfandel, 5% Grenache

ALC: 15.8%

Cases 750 ml: 416

Cases 1.5 L: 99

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: January 2019

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2021-2038

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 2016 Paderewski Vineyard is once again primarily Mataro. If anyone has been keeping track, we have been slowly increasing the amount of Mataro in this bottling and decreasing the amount of Zin. We are really liking how the Mataro does at this sight. It's a great expression of the earthiness of the variety, yet there is still tons of fruit to balance it out. We are truly enjoying the outcome when we age this wine in larger format barrels. This one was aged 67% in a single large Foudre (big-ass French barrel), plus a few puncheons of new French oak, to bring in some of that oak sweetness. I feel this really allows the aromatics to soar out of the glass and grab your senses. Along with the 2015 Rewski, this is my favorite expression of this vineyard yet.

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, Nov 2018

Rating: 97

Drink: 2020-2035

Leading off the 2016s and checking in as interesting blend of 46% Mourvèdre, 19% Syrah, 15% Tempranillo and the balance Petite Sirah, Grenache, and Zinfandel, the 2016 Paderewski shows how good these eclectic blends from the west side of Paso Robles can be. Offering a rocking bouquet of ripe currants, plums, forest floor, truffle, and orange zest, this beauty has no hard edges and offers full body, incredible intensity, and a seamlessness pared with density that needs to be tasted to be believed. This hedonistic yet also elegant 2016 benefits from a decant and has a good 10-15 years of prime drinking ahead of it.

This report looks mostly at the 2016s from undeniable superstar winemaker, Justin Smith. Smith is one of the pioneers of the Paso Robles wine scene yet remains as humble and accessible as ever. Speaking about the 2016s, these are the strongest set of releases since the 2007s, and I suspect at maturity these wines will be even better. They have a rare sense of depth and richness paired with purity and precision, as well as singular

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characters, and these truly are special wines. The 2016 James Berry is quite possibly the greatest wine ever produced from the region and is a legendary wine in the making. Do whatever you can to latch onto a few bottles of this magical elixir. The majority of the 2016s will benefit from 2-4 years of bottle age, but good luck keeping your hands off of them. The 2017s are similarly styled, yet they have slightly more elegance and approachability compared to the denser, richer 2016s. I suspect these will continue to put on weight as well with additional time in barrel. As I've said in the past, there are few mailing lists worth staying on in today wine world; this is one of them.

William Kelley, Wine Advocate, May 2018

Rating: 94-96

Drink: NA

The 2016 Paderewski Vineyard is lovely, revealing complex aromas of ripe black fruits, licorice, aromatic bark, candied peel and dried flowers. On the palate, it's full-bodied, layered and savory, with rich structuring tannins, excellent energy and concentration and a long, stony finish. It's a blend of 46% Mataro, 19% Syrah, 15% Tempranillo, 8% Petite Sirah, 7% Zinfandel and 5% Grenache, maturing in 16% new puncheons, 67% foudre and the balance in used wood. The 2016 will be bottled this June.

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: 97

Drink: NA

Brilliant purple. A complex, intensely perfumed bouquet displays candied black and blue fruit, vanilla and musky earth qualities, while violet, licorice and dark chocolate nuances build in the glass. Sweet and expansive on the palate, offering impressively concentrated, mineral-laced cassis, cherry compote and fruitcake flavors that are given spicy bite by a peppery flourish. Tightens up slowly on a wonderfully long, chewy, floral-dominated finish that's framed by talc-y, well-knit tannins.

2015 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

46% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah, 14% Petite Sirah, 10% Zinfandel

ALC: 15.1%

Cases 750 ml: 500

Cases 1.5 L: 100

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District
Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: January 2018

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2019 - 2032

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. Hmmmmmm, 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!?

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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.

Josh Reynolds, Vinous Nov 2017

Rating: 95

Drink: 2022-2031

Inky ruby. Ripe red and blue fruits, incense and candied flowers on the intensely perfumed, spice- and mineral-accented nose. Velvety in texture and alluringly sweet, offering intense raspberry, blueberry, violet pastille and spicecake flavors that put on weight with air while maintaining vivacity. Shows outstanding energy and sweet, red fruit thrust on the impressively persistent, floral-tinged finish, which is shaped by smooth, harmonious tannins.

Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate Sept 2017

Rating: 97

Drink: 2018-2030

A 46% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah, 14% Petite Sirah and 10% Zinfandel blend, the 2015 Paderewski Vineyard has a deep garnet-purple color and notes of red roses, warm cranberries and blackberries with hints of mulberries, garrigue, moss and dusty earth. Full-bodied, with a lovely fragrant earth and savory-laced palate with firm, grippy tannins and loads of mineral nuances on the long finish.

Jeb Dunnuck, Aug 2017

Rating: 95-97

Drink: n/a

The 2015 Paderewski Vineyard was tasted as a final blend and is a more Mourvèdre dominated blend that includes 46% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah, 14% Petite Sirah and the balance Zinfandel. This is the warmest vineyard they work with and it offers terrific notes of plums, violets, hoisin sauce and spice notes. Rich, beautifully textured, with fine, elegant tannin, it's a seamless and long.

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.

2014 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

30% Mourvèdre, 22% Zinfandel, 13% Syrah, 13% Tempranillo, 12% Grenache, 10% Petite Sirah, ALC: 15.9%

Cases 750 ml: 500

Cases 1.5 L: 100

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: January 2017

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2019 - 2026

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, Aug 2017

Rating: 98

Drink: n/a

Checking in as a final blend of 30% Mourvèdre, 22% Zinfandel, 13% Syrah, 13% Tempranillo and the balance Grenache and Petite Sirah, the 2014 Paderewski Vineyard is as voluptuous and decadent as it gets. Plum sauce, exotic spices, white pepper, candy corn and spring flowers, it hits the palate with a broad, expansive, sexy style, ripe tannin, no weight and a blockbuster finish. It's so well balanced and seamless, it can come across as a touch easy, yet it has terrific complexity, good mid-palate density and a great, great finish. This is what great wine is all about. Drink it 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

SAXUM PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

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

Josh Reynolds, Vinous Nov 2017

Rating: 95

Drink: 2022-2032

Glass-staining ruby. Displays sexy, highly expressive aromas of cassis, blueberry, Indian spices and candied flowers, along with notes of incense and mocha. Sweet, pliant and expansive in the mouth, offering intense red and blue fruit and floral pastille flavors that become spicier and more energetic with air. Dense but nervy and light on its feet, finishing with outstanding clarity, smooth tannins and solid, mineral-driven punch.

Lisa Perrotti-Brown, Wine Advocate Sept 2017

Rating: 94

Drink: 2017-2030

A 30% Mourvèdre, 22% Zinfandel, 13% Syrah, 10% Petite Sirah, 13% Tempranillo and 12% Grenache blend, the 2014 Paderewski Vineyard has a deep garnet-purple color and nose of warm mulberries, blueberry compote and preserved plums with touches of Chinese five spice, licorice, black pepper and underbrush. The full-bodied palate has a solid frame of chewy tannins and just enough freshness supporting the earthy, tightly knit flavors, finishing on a peppery note.

2013 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

34% Mourvèdre, 33% Zinfandel, 13% Petite Sirah, 12% Syrah, 8% Tempranillo

ALC: 15.9%

Cases 750 ml: 600

Cases 1.5 L: 100

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: July 2015

Release Price: \$98

Drink: now - 2022

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

I think this is one of the, if not THE best vintage we have ever had. There are some vintages that are more of this or more of that, but the '13s have a bit of everything. Concentration, but not super rich (hello '14s!), soft tannins but still some grip, great fresh acids but nothing searing or flabby, depth, depth, and more depth, they are as a whole wines that continue to evolve in the glass for days, every sip revealing something new, something that was hidden the previous sip. They will definitely reward a few years of cellaring but will be very enjoyable in the short term.

The Paderewski is not a classic in the sense that I don't feel we have a classic Paderewski Vineyard style yet. We continue to tweak the blend every year and the 2013 is no exception. For the first time the Zinfandel is in second place and Mourvèdre has taken the lead. As the vines at this vineyard age and I get a better handle on them I am more and more a believer that the Mourvèdre from here is insane. We always have two main lots from this vineyard, the first picked is the Zin/Temp/Syrah lot (all co-fermented in a single concrete cube). I'm always blown away

by how awesome it is that the Temp balances the Zin out and how perfectly delicious and fresh it is. Then the later picked Mourvèdre/Petite Sirah lot comes in and I'm flooded! Black, rich, textured with huge chalky tannins and fruit for days. When the blends are finally assembled I love how the Zin really makes everything pop.

REVIEWS:

Jeb Dunnuck, Wine Advocate #226 Issue: Aug 2016

Rating: 97

Drink: 2018-2026

One of the more accessible 2013s is the 2013 Paderewski Vineyard, which checks in as a blend of 34% Mourvèdre, 33% Zinfandel, 13% Petite Sirah, 12% Syrah and the rest Tempranillo. Its deep ruby, vibrant color is followed by sensational notes of caramelized black cherries, spice box, peppery herbs and chalky minerality. Rich, full-bodied, utterly seamless and gorgeous on the palate, it's an incredible expression of this higher elevation, warm site that readers shouldn't miss.

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!

Wine Spectator, Web Issue: Aug 2016

Rating: 92

Drink: 2018-2027

Powerful and loaded with personality, this features aromas of smoky dried berry and black licorice that open to dense, rich flavors of plum, cracked pepper beef and grilled herb. The tannins are ripe but muscular. Mourvèdre, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Syrah and Tempranillo.

Josh Reynolds, Vinuous, Sept 2015

Rating: 94

Drink: 2021-2027

Bright violet color. The nose displays a complex array of black and blue fruit and floral scents, along with suggestions of incense, mocha and licorice. Stains the palate with powerful blueberry and violet pastille flavors sharpened and lifted by juicy acidity. Concentrated, sappy and pure, finishing with outstanding thrust and smooth tannins that are overwhelmed by the wine's dense fruit.

SAXUM PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

2012 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

45% Zinfandel, 36% Mourvèdre, 12% Tempranillo, 7% Petite Sirah

ALC: 15.9%

Cases 750 ml: 385

Cases 1.5 L: 65

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: July 2014

Release Price: \$98

Drink: now - 2021

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

2012 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!

The wines from 2012 are really growing on me. I have to admit that initially, right after putting them into barrel, I was a little perplexed with what I tasted. They didn't have the sweet flesh that I was expecting from the warmer season. What I tasted was more akin to a cross of '10s and '09s. Great dark chalky tannins, like the '10s, but definitely more ripe aromatics like the '09s. However now, as I taste them, they keep gaining more and more flesh. They just took their sweet time showing off the fruit driven side to them. It is quite peculiar, which leads me to believe these wines will only keep getting better and better as they evolve in the bottle and will reward some patience.

The Paderewski wine is the crowd pleaser. The wine is everything you have come to expect from the Paderewski Vineyard. It's a real chameleon, with a lot going on. One minute it's showing Zinfandel fruit and the next it's all muscle and chalk from the Tempranillo component, while the healthy chunk of Mourvèdre

nicely holds everything together. The Temp is like the 300 pound muscle bound bouncer that's keeping everybody in line! Earth, spice, bitter chocolate, coffee beans, and plums, lots of ripe plums. That was last week, by the time you try it who knows what this crazy blend will taste like.

REVIEWS:

Jeb Dunnuck, Wine Advocate #214 Issue: Aug 2014

Rating: 96+

Drink: 2015-2024

Surprisingly tannic and structured for a wine that's normally the most approachable and sexy, the 2012 Paderewski Vineyard checks in as a blend of 45% Zinfandel, 36% Mourvedre, 12% Tempranillo and 7% Petite Sirah. It possesses the classic chalky minerality of the vineyard to go with exotic perfumed notes of black raspberry, plums, brambly underbrush and assorted background meatiness. This all flows to a full-bodied, elegant and polished wine that has solid mid-palate depth and chewy, firm tannin on the finish. Give this a year or more in the cellar and enjoy bottles through 2024.

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 Rhône-like, 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.

2011 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

34% Zinfandel, 31% Mourvèdre, 16% Tempranillo, 10% Syrah, 9% Petite Sirah

ALC: 15.7%

Cases 750 ml: 350

Cases 1.5 L: 70

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: August 2013

Release Price: \$89

Drink: now - 2021

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The 'Rewski Vineyard is in a slightly warmer microclimate, and the resulting wine definitely leans on the dark fruit side. We utilized a good amount of Tempranillo and Mourvèdre in this blend, with less Syrah than typical. What always blows me away about this vineyard is how floral it is. Ripe peaches are consistently found in the nose, along with honeysuckle and roses. It's as if this wine had a large percentage of Viognier hiding in it. However, on the pallet it has tons of dark fruit.... think black cherries dipped in bitter dark chocolate. The finish is classic 'Rewski, with long echoes of chalky dusty tannins. I think this incarnation of the Paderewski Vineyard is our best yet, and I love how no single variety sticks out, really letting the terrior of this sight shine.

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REVIEWS:

Jeb Dunnuck, Wine Advocate #214 Issue: Aug 2014

Rating: 97

Drink: 2014-2026

Kicking off the 2011s and about as seductive and sexy as they come in the vintage, the 2011 Paderewski Vineyard is an eclectic blend of 34% Zinfandel, 31% Mourvedre, 16% Tempranillo, 10% Syrah and 9% Petite Sirah that comes from a warmer terroir of chalky, calcareous soils. Full-bodied, seamless and perfectly balanced, it offers brilliant aromas and flavors of black raspberry, rose petal, bramble and violets that are to die for. A big wine to be sure, yet it stays remarkably elegant, poised and fresh on the palate, with no hard edges and an approachable, utterly impossible-to-resist profile that keeps you pouring another glass. Enjoy this gorgeous wine anytime over the coming 10-12 years.

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 Rhone-like, 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: Feb 28, 2014

Rating: 92

Drink: 2015-2021

A bruiser, muscular and ripe, with floral boysenberry and chunky chocolate aromas that lead to rich huckleberry flavors, accented by notes of licorice and smoky, savory herb. Shows a touch of heat on the finish. Zinfandel, Mourvedre, Tempranillo, Syrah and Petite Sirah. Best from 2015 through 2021.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar Nov/Oct 13

Rating: 94

Inky purple. Powerful, expansive aromas of dark berry compote, cola, dark chocolate and licorice, with a smoky mineral quality adding vivacity. Sappy, deeply pitched blackberry and cassis flavors are sharpened by juicy acidity and

gain sweetness with air. Shows outstanding clarity and power on the finish, which features supple tannins and sweet, clinging dark berry preserve and floral pastille notes.

Antonio Galloni, Vinous, Aug 2014

Rating: 94

Drink: 2015-2023

One of the more immediate wines in this range of the 2011s, the Paderewski Vineyard, is voluptuous and textured to the core, with huge dark red/black fruit, spice and leather notes. The Paderewski is dense and powerful, with plenty of immediacy but a touch less overall complexity than some of the other wines in the range. Still, the marriage of varieties in this Zinfandel-based red is terrific. In 2011, the Paderewski is 34% Zinfandel, 31% Mourvedre, 16% Tempranillo, 10% Syrah and 9% 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.

2010 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

36% Zinfandel, 26% Mourvedre, 19% Tempranillo, 11% Syrah, 9% Petite Sirah

ALC: 16.1%

Cases 750 ml: 395

Cases 1.5 L: 120

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: August 2012

Release Price: \$89

Drink: now - 2021

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Our second Paderewski bottling is firing on all cylinders. I backed off on the Syrah and used a lot more Mourvedre, and added a new component, Tempranillo. Yes I know, we are crazy! It's a Zinfandel/Mourvedre/Tempranillo/Syrah/Petite Sirah blend, and it shows its terroir beautifully. What you get from this wine is a taste of the Paderewski Vineyard. It is dark, brooding and muscular, while at the same time jam packed with tons of sweet fruits. There's even a spicy tannic side lurking in there, underneath those fruit flavors. Thanks to the cool, long growing season, it has a wonderful freshness and purity to it combined with great underlying tannins.

REVIEWS:

Antonio Galloni, Wine Advocate #202, Aug 2012

Rating: 95

Drink: 2012-2020

The 2010 Paderewski Vineyard caresses the palate with layers of expressive, sensual fruit. Zinfandel plays the leading role in the Paderewski, and that comes through loud and clear in the wine's inner perfume and sweetness. The 2010 boasts gorgeous length and purity, even if it is a bit tight from its recent bottling. Paderewski is a little warmer than some of the other sites Saxum works with, which seems to give the wine a note of softness that is immensely appealing, especially with some time in the glass. The 2010 is 35% Zinfandel, 26% Mourvedre, 19%

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Tempranillo, 11% Syrah and 9% Petite Sirah. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2020.

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.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar Nov/Oct 12

Rating: 94

Opaque purple. An exotically perfumed bouquet displays scents of spice-accented black raspberry, cherry, violet and incense, with a bright mineral quality gaining power with air. Densely packed but impressively vibrant, offering sweet red and dark berry flavors that show iqueur-like depth and intensity. Floral pastille and raspberry notes carry through a long, sappy, seamless finish.

Jeb Dunnuck, The Rhone Report

Rating: 95

A kitchen sink blend of 35% Zinfandel, 26% Mourvedre, 19% Tempranillo, 11% Syrah, and 9% Petite Sirah that comes all from Bill and Liz Armstrong's (Epoch Wines) Paderewski Vineyard (4th leaf), the 2010 Paderewski Vineyard is a perfumed extrovert that delivers loads of Zin flair, with brambly black and blue fruits, licorice, charred earth, spice-box, and crushed flowers on the nose. Sweetly fruited, seamless, and gorgeously textured, with a powerful, tannic, and heady finish, this hedonistic effort also stays light on the palate and is hard to resist. It too should benefit from short term cellaring, and impress for over a decade.

2009 PADEREWSKI VINEYARD

39% Zinfandel, 38% Syrah, 13% Petite Sirah, 10% Mourvèdre
ALC: 15.9%

Cases 750 ml: 400

AVA: Paso Robles Willow Creek District

Vineyard: Paderewski Vineyard

Released: January 2012

Release Price: \$85

Drink: now - 2021

NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

The Paderewski Vineyard is a beautiful property owned by Bill and Liz Armstrong, the owners of Epoch Estate. It was the site of the legendary vineyard of Ignacy Jan Paderewski. If you are unfamiliar with the life and music of Ignacy, please look into it, he was a fascinating character and brilliant musician. Long story short, we have replanted the original site. We felt a wine coming from the Paderewski Vineyard had to include the original varieties that made it famous, Zinfandel and Petite Sirah, but in a blend that also showcased our beloved Rhone Varietals too. Our wines are never racked off their lees and are bottled unfiltered and unfiltered.

REVIEWS:

Antonio Galloni, Wine Advocate #196, Aug 2011

Rating: 97

Drink: 2014-2021

The 2009 Paderewski Vineyard is a new bottling from a site Smith developed for Bill and Liz Armstrong, the owners of Epoch. Zinfandel, Syrah, Petit Sirah and Mourvèdre are planted in separate plots but co-fermented. Layers of dark fruit meld into flowers, mint, sweet spices, menthol, eucalyptus and plums, with marvelous density and harmony. This shows superb aromatic complexity and tons of nuance to match its absolutely striking personality. It is a dazzling effort, especially for a young vineyard in just its third leaf. The blend was 39% Zinfandel, 38% Syrah, 13% Petite Sirah and 10% Mourvèdre. 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

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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.

Josh Reynolds, Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar

Nov/Oct 11

Rating: 93

Inky purple. Seductively perfumed aromas of dark berry preserves, potpourri, Asian spices, anise and mocha. Broad, sweet and spicy in the mouth, showing outstanding vivacity to its black and blue fruit flavors accented by clove and candied flowers. Finishes spicy and lucid. This is the first release for this bottling.