

# SAXUM BROKEN STONES

## 2022 BROKEN STONES

66% Syrah, 13% Graciano, 11% Zinfandel, 10% Grenache  
ALC: 15.9%  
Cases 750 ml: 1070  
Cases 1.5 L: 40  
Released: January 2025  
Release Price: \$138  
Drink: now-2040

### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Damn this wine is good. Do I need to say more? It's doing its job.

### REVIEWS:

**Jeb Dunnuck, August 2024**

**Rating: 97**

**Drink: after 2027**

*One of the more structured, inward 2022s from Smith and a wine that's going to benefit from short-term cellaring, ... It takes some coaxing but slowly gives up wonderfully pure red and black fruits interwoven with classic peppery herbs, violets, savory spice, and floral nuances. Beautifully textured and medium to full-bodied, with just about perfect tannins, it needs to be hidden for 3-4 years but is one hell of an impressive wine.*

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## 2021 BROKEN STONES

54% Syrah, 24% Mataro, 20% Graciano, 2% Petite Sirah  
ALC: 15.5%  
Cases 750 ml: 1199  
Cases 1.5 L: 80  
Released: January 2024  
Release Price: \$135  
Drink: now-2040

### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

I'm really excited about this version of Broken Stones. It seems fairly typical. It is Syrah dominated, and was mainly raised in small 225L barriques, about 75% of which were new. However, this is the first year our new Syrah planting up in the Santa Lucia Mountains made its way into the blend. (What we are now calling Old Creek Vineyard, formerly referred to as Cayucos Ridge.). The new Syrah only makes up around 11%, but it definitely brings a bit of black pepper spice to the game. The rest is the usual sources, with James Berry Vineyard making up the bulk, a sprinkling of G2, Heart Stone, and a splash of Dusi. It's a show stopper. Rich in texture, aromas of black fruits and spices, and our characteristic brightness that is always there thanks to our limestone soils. Oh yeah, and the finish goes on and on and on and on..... This wine is a pleaser.

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.

### REVIEWS:

**Eric Guido, Vinous, July 2024**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2028-2038**

*A whiff of savory herbs and earth tones, black olives, and musky currant smolders up from the 2021 Broken Stones. It is silky and round with supple red berry fruits complemented by cedary spices and rosy inner florals. The 2021 keeps the energy high while finishing staining and long with a liquid floral concentration, steeped plums and a pleasantly bitter tinge. While lovely today, this possesses the balance to age beautifully. This is the first vintage of Broken Stones that contains some of the new plantings of San Luis Obispo coast Syrah from Saxum's new vineyards.*

**Tim Fish, Wine Spectator, June 2024**

**Rating: 96**

**Drink: now - 2035**

*Dynamic and exuberantly expressive, with wild berry patch accents highlighted by orange peel, grilled anise, river stone and savory beef tones that build richness and tension toward polished tannins.*

**Matthew Luczy, Wine Advocate, June 2024**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2026-2036**

*Always a non-vineyard designated Syrah blend... It was fermented with 30% stems and aged 22 months in 75% new 225-liter barrique, the highest portion of smaller barrels used in the Saxum roster due to its tannic levels. The nose opens with a lavish floral perfume and savory, polished, opaque fruit aromas. The palate is full-bodied and concentrated before catapulting into a clean, lifted, juicy finish of crushed stones and fine yet persistent, swelling tannins framed with pleasingly rounded new-oak influence. This reacted quickly to aeration and gained substantial length from the first pour, suggesting it is best left to unwind a few years in the cellar.*

*While there is no shortage of Paso Robles producers who hang their hats on going for the biggest and boldest wines in the area, Saxum's ability to craft powerful wines that deliver opulence and complexity while remaining balanced and authentic is second to none. Proprietor and winemaker Justin Smith's influence in the region is inescapable, as many other premier winemakers in the area either grew up with him, have hired him as a consultant, worked stints at Saxum, or any combination thereof. The wines are a true reflection of the region and, as such, are unapologetically bold and intense. However, they consistently offer nuance and elegance that are fleetingly rare in wines of their size and stature.*

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## 2020 BROKEN STONES

57% Syrah, 13% Grenache, 11% Graciano, 10% Mataro, 6% Petite Sirah, 3% Zinfandel

ALC: 15.7%

Cases 750 ml: 1193

Cases 1.5 L: 79

Released: July 2022

Release Price: \$132

Drink: now-2040

### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

Beautiful sexy richness. Great lift and energy while also being polished and refined. A finish that goes on for days. This sees more new oak than the other 2020s. Probably my favorite of these 2020s, but that's a personal thing. Heather says she likes the Heart Stone best, so your mileage may vary!

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!

### REVIEWS:

**Matthew Luczy, Wine Advocate, June 2024**

**Rating: 93**

**Drink: 2024-2030**

*The nose is brooding, perfumed and intriguing, driven by dark-fruited, peppery, savory aromas with accents of purple flowers. The palate is unabashed in its plush concentration, leading to an intense and harmonious finish of structured, fine tannins surrounding grilled, meaty flavors that, if tasted in the context of a non-Syrah-dominant wine, could be perceived as hints of smoke-tinged fruit. However, the performance of the nose and overall completeness of the finish are instructive and reassuring, especially when tasted side by side with more clearly affected wines in the roster.*

**Tim Fish, Wine Spectator, July 2023 Insider**

**Rating: 94**

**Drink: 2025 - 2034**

*Potent and brooding, this blend slowly reveals itself, with a medley of blackberry, roasted anise, crushed stone and white pepper flavors that build toward burly tannins. Hands off for now. Syrah, Grenache, Graciano, Mataro, Petite Sirah and Zinfandel. Best from 2025 through 2034.*

**Eric Guido, Vinous, March 2023**

**Rating: 93**

**Drink: 2025-2033**

*The 2020 Broken Stones is undeniably pretty, with sweet spice and dusty rose giving way to crushed strawberries. This traverses both salty and sweet, with crisp red fruits and mineral tones motivated by zesty acidity. The Broken Stones finishes gently tannic, with a saturation of primary concentration that adds further tension, yet retains remarkable freshness.*

*It is impossible to travel and taste in Paso Robles without hearing the name Saxum repeatedly. Simply stated, Saxum placed the region on the map and continues to turn out one of its top wine portfolios year after year. Many winemakers got their start working with Justin Smith, owner and winemaker, while many others source fruit from vineyards that he or his father designed and planted. The style is unapologetically ripe and rich, just as Smith likes it, as do countless loyal followers that keep this one of the most highly desired mail lists in town. I tasted a mix of 2020s and 2019s, two very different vintages. The 2019s are simply gorgeous, deep and powerful, with a long and bright future ahead. While the 2020s are more generous up front, they still show fantastic complexity but in a package that will be easier to understand in their early goings. Smith mentioned that while there were smoke issues, he felt they were minimal and that dialing back on co-ferments and using stems was very helpful. Ultimately, these are wines that no fan of the estate should be without. Smith's new project in Shadow Canyon on York Mountain is something to look forward to. The goal is to, one day, use only estate fruit. This cooler location is about ten miles from the ocean, with more annual rainfall and sandstone soils. A new 15-acre vineyard, primarily Grenache, will be planted shortly.*

**Jeb Dunnuck, August 2023**

**Rating: 93**

**Drink: n/a**

*Leading off the 2020s from bottle, the 2020 Broken Stones ... It does well in the vintage, with a deeper, full-bodied, concentrated style to go with plenty of perfumed darker berry fruits as well as notes of ground pepper, smoked herbs, and graphite. It has good purity of fruit, ripe tannins, and outstanding length.*

*The 2020s from Saxum are solid wines, although there are subtle signs of smoke in a few of the wines, and in general, the wines are narrower and more focused than normal, yet still nicely concentrated. At a high level, I think these are good to outstanding wines that will offer pleasure. Clearly the 2021s are a step up, and this is another brilliant vintage for winemaker Justin Smith.*

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## 2019 BROKEN STONES

60% Syrah, 20% Graciano, 11% Mataro, 7% Grenache, 2% Carignan

ALC: 15.7%

Cases 750 ml: 1500

Cases 1.5 L: 60

Released: July 2021

Release Price: \$98

Drink: now-2041

### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

I am really excited to get this wine into your glasses. It's my favorite Broken Stones yet. It embodies what makes the 19s so awesome. The perfect balance of spice (black pepper) and fruit (blackberry and blueberry) with long lush tannins and a great loooooong finish. Drink it now, drink it next year, drink it 20

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years from now. It's going to be tasty whenever you pop the cork. Crowd pleaser and so much more. It delivers.

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**

*Glass-staining ruby. Lush and expansive on the deeply perfumed nose, displaying intense black and blue fruit, incense, cola, Moroccan spice and violet oil scents and a smoky mineral flourish. Broad, weighty and alluringly sweet, offering palate-coating blueberry, cassis, cherry-vanilla and fruitcake flavors sharpened by a spicy suggestion of cracked pepper. Finishes extremely long and spicy, with a repeating blue fruit note and rounded tannins adding shape and subtle closing grip.*

*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 BROKEN STONES

49% Syrah, 21% Graciano, 13% Petite Sirah, 8% Grenache, 7% Mataro, 2% Viognier

ALC: 15.9%

Cases 750 ml: 1306

Cases 1.5 L: 60

Released: July 2020

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2023-2043

### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

I feel the Broken Stones just keeps getting better and better. You may taste the '17 Stones and wonder, "How can it get even better than this?" Well let me tell you. We keep fine tuning this beast each year, dropping or replanting some blocks that aren't up to snuff and bringing in new blocks that are dynamite. Namely the addition of more Graciano and a new planting of Petite Sirah here at James Berry Vineyard. At this point the majority of fruit is JBV, with G2 coming in second, and a little Paderewski Syrah holding its own in the final blend. It is dark and brooding but with a wonderful core of fruit that is framed up perfectly with some oak. There's even a kiss of Viognier in there that I swear you can get a hint of when the wind is right, and it's only 2%!! This wine strikes that perfect balance of being fairly approachable now but will just keep getting better and better. Stash away enough so that you can pull one out once every year or two and track it over the next decade plus. This wine will be fun to visit in 20 years. Seriously, let's have a virtual zoom tasting in 20 years to enjoy this wine together, better yet, let's all get together and raise a glass!!! Oh man do I miss social gathering/drinking!!

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.

### REVIEWS:

**Jeb Dunnuck, Sept 2020**

**Rating: 98**

**Drink: 2020-2030**

*Made in the more meaty, powerful style that this cuvée has shifted to, the 2018 Broken Stones is 49% Syrah, 21% Graciano, 13% Petite Sirah, 8% Grenache, and 7% Mataro, and a splash of Viognier. Killer stuff, it has a massive Syrah nose of black and blue fruits, ground pepper, game, and crushed violets. With full-bodied richness, a bright, juicy texture, ripe tannins, and a rocking finish, it's a thrill a minute and can be enjoyed today or cellared for a solid decade.*

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**Josh Reynolds, Vinous, Dec 2020**

**Rating: 98**

**Drink: 2026-2036**

*Vibrant purple. Powerful dark berry, cherry cola, incense, potpourri, musky earth, licorice and spice-cake aromas show superb clarity and acquire a smoky mineral nuance as the wine opens up. Sweet, seamless and energetic in the mouth, offering deeply concentrated blueberry, cherry preserve, five-spice powder and floral pastille flavors that are given lift and focus by a spine of juicy acidity. Marries richness to finesse with a sure hand and finishes incredibly long and precise, with gently firming tannins adding shape and closing grip.*

*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, Oct 2020**

**Rating: 95**

**Drink: 2020-2035**

*The 2018 Broken Stones is composed of 49% Syrah, 21% Graciano, 13% Petite Sirah, 8% Grenache, 7% Mataro and 2% Viognier aged in around 60% new oak. Vibrant ruby-purple, it opens to char, bacon fat and violets over a dense core of jammy black and blue fruit with lifting minty accents. The palate is full-bodied and packed with ripe fruits, wrapped in a very firm but finely grained frame and with just enough freshness, finishing on a floral note.*

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### 2017 BROKEN STONES

66% Syrah, 16% Grenache, 14% Petite Sirah, 4% Mataro

ALC: 15.5%

Cases 750 ml: 1160

Cases 1.5 L: 50

Released: July 2019

Release Price: \$98

Drink: 2022-2040

#### NOTES FROM JUSTIN:

We continue to refine our Broken Stones with the 2017 vintage. It's our only Syrah based cuvée that is not a vineyard designate, so we get to play with lots from multiple vineyards. James Berry

makes up the largest chunk, with a 4 acre block of Syrah we planted in 1996. This block continues to get more amazing every year. Black, with a chewy spine of tannin and acid.

There's more G2 Vineyard in here than ever before, and we are really happy about that. G2 is turning out to be a stellar site! We aged the wine in a good portion of new French 300L barrels which provided just the right amount of spicy sweet oak.

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

**Tasting Date: 10/31/2019**

**Rating: 97**

**Drink: 2021-2036**

*The 2017 Broken Stones is another full-bodied effort, yet it has a wonderful sense of elegance and purity as well as complexity. Deep purple-hued with rocking chalky minerality as well as notes of black raspberries, blood orange, incense, and flowers, it hits the palate with sweet tannins, no hard edges, a stunning texture, and a great finish.*

*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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**Tim Fish, Wine Spectator**  
**Producer Spotlight, Dec. 18, 2019**  
**Rating: 93**

**Drink: 2019 through 2030**

*Multilayered and compelling, with expressive blueberry, orange peel and smoky meat flavors, accented by crushed stone notes and building tension toward fine-grained tannins. Syrah, Grenache, Petite Sirah and Mataro.*

*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.*

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### 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*

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*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 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. 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!? 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.*

## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

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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### 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*

## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

*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 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



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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 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, Mourvedre 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.

## 2011 BROKEN STONES

78% Syrah, 18% Mourvedre, 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

## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

more to fully unwind, and the style here is much more Rhonelike, 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.

**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.

## 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

## SAXUM BROKEN STONES

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 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 entrancing. I think they will have a long bottle life, not due to heavy tannins needing time to resolve, but because they are so well balanced they will keep evolving and improving in bottle.

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

#### REVIEWS:

**Antonio Galloni, Wine Advocate #196, Aug 2011**

**Rating: 96**

**Drink: 2014-2021**

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

This is a thrilling set of wines from Heather and Justin Smith. Everything starts and ends in the vineyards for Justin Smith. His family owns the James Berry Vineyard, one of the rare sites in Paso Robles on limestone. Smith has also planted several other top vineyards in Paso while mentoring a number of his colleagues. Smith describes 2009 as a long, cold growing season with a lot of rain. All of the Grenache and Syrah was in before the big storm on October 13, while the Mourvedre was picked a few weeks later. Smith credits dry-farming for keeping his vines robust and able to withstand the elements. Winemaking is stripped down to the core. Two sorting tables ensure only the finest fruit makes it to the crusher. The grapes are gently destemmed, then undergo around 7 days of cold soak with a high amount of whole berries, and some whole clusters (as noted below). There is no sulfur added at crush. The wines undergo a total of approximately 30-40 days of maceration with indigenous yeasts and are then moved straight to barrel, with their gross lees, for approximately 19 months (longer for the Bone Rock) with no rackings until the wines are prepared for bottling. Smith favors 350 and 400-liter barrels over the more standard 225/228 liter barrique. Smith selects the barrels he thinks are most expressive to site for his single vineyard wines, then uses the rest of the barrels, which he defines as the punchier, juicier wines, for the Broken Stones bottling, which is sourced from all of the vineyards in the Saxum lineup. My tasting ended with three barrel samples of the 2010s, another cold, late harvest. These aren't finished wines, but the quality of what I tasted was extraordinary. The first sample was a late-harvested Syrah from Bone Rock (60% whole clusters) co-fermented with 10% Roussanne that was mind-blowing. This may end up being bottled on its own. The second sample was 100% Grenache from concrete. It was full of character and dazzling. The last barrel sample was James Berry Mourvedre (from a hilltop parcel) co-fermented with a little bit of Syrah. It,

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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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### 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 unfinned 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

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to pick the grapes when we wanted.

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

REVIEWS:

**Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #184, Aug 2009**

**Rating: 96+**

**Drink: 2011-2026**

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

**James Laube, Wine Spectator, Issue: Web Only 2009**

**Rating: 96**

**Drink: now through 2017**

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

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

**Rating: 95**

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

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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 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.

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### 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

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prior to being bottled unfinned 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.