



2003 SYRAH “STOLPMAN”

This is 100% Syrah for the Stolpman Vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley. Stolpman Vineyard is in the hills just west of the town of Los Olivos. The soil has a lot of limestone in it, more so than any other Santa Barbara County Syrah vineyard I deal with. I've been making Syrah from Stolpman since 1996, and with the exception of a great 2001, I've always blended it into our Central Coast Syrah. This is part of a new program at Stolpman. Under the guidance of Stolpman's winemaker Sashi Moorman and vineyard manager Jeff Newton they are “super farming” their best vineyard blocks to get the very best quality attainable.

This wine is from the Tablas Creek clone 99, which seems especially well suited to Stolpman's terroir. The grapes were harvested on October 14 and they were like textbook perfect, 24.6° brix, 3.59 pH and 6.3 grams acidity. We used out traditional “Modern Stone Age” techniques: destemmed without crushing, cold soak for 48 hours, open-top fermenters with manual punchdowns twice a day. Fermentation lasted 17 days; we pressed, settled for 24 hours and then put the wine to barrel. I only had 1 ½ tons of the “super farmed” (and I might add “super expensive”) fruit which gave us 4 barrels (one new François Frères, one 1 year old Françoise Frères and two neutral barrels). The wine was aged 16 months, was racked three times and 96 cases were bottled in February 2005 without fining or filtration.

Aside from the Alisos Vineyards Syrah (which will be released later), this is the biggest and most rustic of our 2003 single vineyards. The aromas exhibit a deep, almost jammy raspberry fruit with hints of spice and pepper, and a bit of smoked meat. Rich flavors, balanced acidity and persistent tannins argue for some aging. It's still a juicy, forward 2003 though, so I'd say now to 3-5 years.