

SHANE

CRAFTED IN SEBASTOPOL, CA

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ISSUE EIGHT, AUGUST 28 2012

When I started Shane Wines in 2006, I envisioned creating wines that expressed “cool-climate” terroir. That year, I sourced Syrah from Bennett Valley and Anderson Valley.

I had experience with Anderson Valley Syrah (and Pinot Noir) from my days at Copain Wines in the early 2000s. Bennett Valley, however, was a mystery to me.

In 2006, Bennett Valley was recasting itself as a Rhône varietal haven. It was quickly building a reputation for wines with structure, typicity, focus, and balance. These qualities were foremost in my mind after my year-long sojourn in the Northern Rhône. I spent some months researching the area and then cold-calling vineyard owners. Luckily, Jim Mack of the Jemrose Vineyard agreed to sell me a small parcel of Syrah. I felt extremely grateful to be wedged in rows between Carlisle Winery and Jim’s own wine brand.

A few years later, in 2008, I decided to expand my holdings in Bennett Valley and contacted the owners of the Judge Vineyard. A mere two miles from the Jemrose Vineyard, the Judge Vineyard produces a remarkably different Syrah. It was then that I realized the true nature of Bennett Valley’s terroir.

Uniquely positioned in Sonoma County, Bennett Valley is a channel for the fog emanating from another emerging appellation – the Petaluma Wind Gap. The Valley is surrounded by three mountain peaks that act as barriers to the heat rising from the north and east; these peaks also form the perfect funnel for cool winds and fog flowing from the south.

As a result, vineyard crop yields are tiny and grape flavors are intensified. However, the chilly environs also come with some peril. Harvest dates are typically around Halloween and often into November. With such late ripening comes the specter of rains and rot. In 2009, both the Jemrose and Judge Vineyards were pushed through a few rain events, but thankfully meticulous vineyard practices avoided any rot.

Therefore, the release before you is an entrée into a pioneering sub-appellation of Sonoma County. It is a testament to family-owned and family-farmed vineyards. It also explores the diversity of soils, exposition, and clones. Please enjoy these formidable wines.





THE WINES

JEMROSE VINEYARD, 2009 SYRAH
BENNETT VALLEY
100 CASES PRODUCED, \$40

Throughout the years, I have compared the Jemrose Vineyard Syrah to several Northern Rhône appellations. One year it's a ringer for Cornas; another year it exhibits more Hermitage like qualities; and, at its most balanced, it can resemble Côte-Rôtie. The comparisons have always been apt and the 2009 version certainly merits the same notation. This year I can find elements of all three archetypes so I will leave it to you to decide.

The typography of Jemrose is reminiscent of the Northern Rhône. The steep north-facing slope of its "Cardiac Hill" is every bit a challenge to climb as many of the vineyards I worked in France. Its fractured rocks make traversing the vineyard a challenge, and occasionally remind me why I prefer to work in the flat comfort of the winery.

Like its cousin, Valenti Ranch, I extended the barrel aging for the Jemrose Syrah by four months. Its robust tannins and dense structure gave me confidence the wine would benefit from additional time in barrel. As with Valenti Ranch, the additional barrel time made a marked difference for the better. It allowed some of the wild tannins to mellow and made the wine more approachable come bottling.

Picked on the 26th of October, fermented with seventy-five percent whole clusters, equal parts 174 and 470 clones, aged for fourteen months in twenty-five percent new French oak, and bottled without fining or filtration, the 2009 Jemrose Vineyard Syrah expresses the savory side of Syrah. One hundred cases produced.

JUDGE VINEYARD, 2009 SYRAH
BENNETT VALLEY
100 CASES PRODUCED, \$40

The second edition of the Judge Vineyard builds upon the vibrant fruit elements found in its predecessor. A striking contrast to the Jemrose Vineyard, the Judge Vineyard offers intense blue and black fruit elements up front that are backed by sensual floral and spice overtones. The Judge Vineyard is a true expression of California Syrah. It hints at its French roots, with a focus on purity of fruit flavors rather than jam, but it throttles forward in a more exuberant fashion reminiscent of California swagger.

Just a few miles to the northwest of the Jemrose Vineyard, the Judge Vineyard lies in a rocky swale often enveloped by the dense morning fog. It sits at a lower elevation than its neighbor Jemrose and sees the sun later in the day. Further, the vineyard has a slight east-west slope dotted with larger rocks and often pockets of cool air hang well into the day. Thus, the Judge Vineyard is harvested later than the Jemrose Vineyard and crop yields need to be closely monitored to assure proper grape maturity.

Due to its more refined tannins and fruit-forward nature, I decided to bottle the Judge Vineyard prior to the 2010 harvest and after ten months in barrel. I wanted to capture the brilliance of the fruit elements and I felt bottle aging, rather than barrel aging, would accomplish this goal. I hope you will agree.

Picked on the 28th of October, fermented with fifty percent whole clusters, equal parts 877, 174, and Estrella River clones, aged for ten months in forty percent new French oak, and bottled without fining or filtration, the 2009 Judge Vineyard Syrah captures the brightness of Syrah. One hundred cases produced.



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MY NOTES

A striking mélange of spice and savory characteristics immediately reveal themselves. Olive tapenade, tobacco leaf, blackberries, and cracked black pepper lift the nose. The wine is supported by rich and firm tannins that accentuate fennel and sage elements and abundant currant tones. The wine finishes with a flourish of venison, iodine, and boysenberry.

MY NOTES

Want fruit? The wine explodes with layers of blueberries, boysenberries, and violets. The Judge Vineyard is seductive and pretty. It unfurls over fine-grained tannins with sumptuous elements of kirsch, cigar box, and graphite. The more refined tannins provide a supple bridge to a spirited finish of anise, blackberries, and dark chocolate.