



Written by Jancis Robinson

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Ramey, Rodgers Creek Syrah 2013 Sonoma Coast

I am a horribly stingy scorer. For a young, non-classic wine to get 18 points out of 20 from me is embarrassingly rare. So today's wine really is exceptional in my view.

It's not cheap but it is stunning. Fans of northern Rhône wines will recognize the class, gloss, excitement and majestic fragrance of ripe Syrah, all leather and black pepper, but this is not a frail embryonic bud. It's already a gorgeous wine in full bloom, overlaid with just the



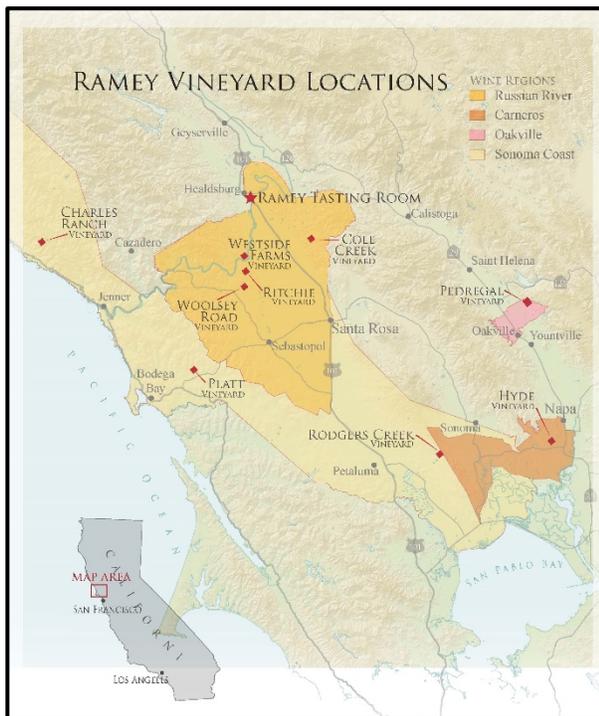
right level of ripeness – nothing excessively sweet but enough to make it gulpable already. Think juicy black olives and something particularly savoury – umami, perhaps. As usual with any tasting note on JancisRobinson.com, we try to suggest a drinking window and in this case I think probably 2016 to 2024 – quite an extended one for a California Syrah, but then Ramey's wines are hugely distinctive.

As I explained in [Three top drawer Californians](#) last month, I have long been an admirer of Ramey's long-lived, subtle, hand-crafted wines, and had the pleasure of a tasting with Dave and Carla Ramey when they were over in the UK recently.

As I had in the past, I very much admired their restrained Chardonnays and enjoyed a Pinot Noir and a couple of Cabernets from the one Napa Valley vineyard they buy fruit from. But the

standout wine was this particularly pure Syrah from the specific block of Rodgers Creek vineyard shown below that was planted for them in 2002 with the 877 clone of Syrah.

Their block is at 800 feet (245 m) elevation in the south west of this site with its poor volcanic soils on the western, Pacific-facing side of Sonoma Mountain, so battered by wind and cooled nightly by marine fogs that it is regularly the last vineyard the Ramey team pick. Yields are rarely more than two tons per acre. About 5% Viognier is included in the ferment, following the tradition of Côte Rôtie. Ramey is well acquainted with the highways, byways and quirks of Europe.



The map shows where exactly Rodgers Creek vineyard is and so far it sits in the capacious Sonoma Coast AVA but, as Dave explained to me, it will eventually qualify for the Petaluma Gap AVA – once President Trump gets the people in place to approve it. It was as a result of this conversation about a new AVA that I suggested to Elaine (Chukan Brown) that she tell us about it and the result was her excellent [Petaluma Gap - a windy AVA](#) on hold, also published last month.



I don't usually choose a wine this expensive in this wine of the week slot but this exceptional California Syrah, as well as being very well distributed in the US (not just a mailing list rarity), is reasonably widely available in Europe: in the UK (importer FMV, 90 of whose wines are described in [Julia's \(Harding MW\) tasting article](#) today), Switzerland and Belgium, according to wine searcher.com. I am told it is also available for £74.75 from Berry Bros & Rudd but does not feature on bbr.com at the time of writing.

You can read much more about Ramey Wine Cellars on their excellent [website](#) from which you can buy wine direct.