



Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s

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The WINE ADVOCATE®

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ANDREW MURRAY VINEYARDS

1996	ROUSSANNE	SANTA BARBARA	(\$25.00)	WHITE	89
1996	SYRAH HILLSIDE RESERVE	SANTA BARBARA	(\$25.00)	RED	90+
1996	SYRAH LES COTEAUX	SANTA BARBARA	(\$18.00)	RED	90
1996	ROUSSANNE	SANTA BARBARA	(\$25.00)	WHITE	87

This relatively new producer is an emerging star in Santa Barbara. The hillside vineyards are dedicated to Rhone varietals, and early efforts are impressive. As I have stated before, Roussanne appears to have found a promising home in Santa Barbara's various micro-climates and soils. Andrew Murray's **1996 Roussanne** reveals the varietal's tell-tale rose petal aromatics intermixed with scents of ripe apricots citrus. This medium to full-bodied wine possesses a terrific texture, in addition to a layered, chewy palate with fine ripeness and impressive length. Consume this Roussanne over the next two years. The **1997 Viognier** exhibits an evolved color with a hint of copper. The nose offers uncomplicated, but intense smells of honeysuckle and ripe tropical fruit. While concentrated and dry, with a fine texture, this cleanly made, attractive wine is a bit clunky, bordering on heavy. Given its fragile construction and delicate aromatics, it requires drinking over the next year.

I tasted two Syrah cuvees. The **1996 Syrah Les Coteaux** is more rustic, or as the French would say, sauvage. Its robust, exuberant, inky

character is hard to ignore. The color is saturated purple. The bouquet offers leesy, peppery, black currant, and berry aromas intermixed with tar and loamy soil scents. This full-bodied wine exhibits explosive fruit, Syrah's tell-tale smokiness, and a rich, moderately tannic, spicy finish with copious quantities of glycerin. The tannin is not totally integrated, but the wine is impressively large and aromatic. It would provide an ideal accompaniment to grilled steak or game birds. Moreover, it should continue to improve for 5-7 years, and last for 12 or more. The impressive **1996 Syrah Hillside Reserve** is more restrained, elegant, tannic, and backward. I admired its saturated purple color, as well as its pure blackberry/cassis aromas intermixed with spicy new oak. There is a touch of minerality and good spice, but it is a more polite, suave, and gracefully constructed wine that its sibling. Nevertheless, it should unleash more of its personality with another 1-2 years of bottle age; it will keep for a decade or more. Tel (805) 686-9604; Fax (805) 686-9704.