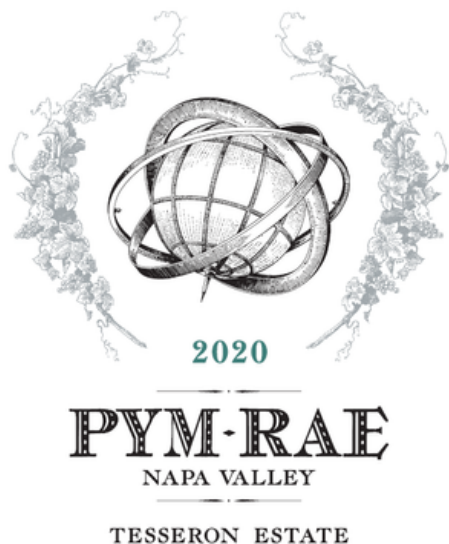


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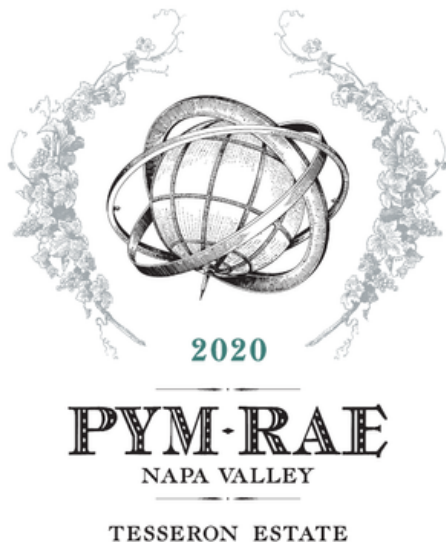
98

Pym Rae (Tesseron Estate) 2020 (Mount Veeder, Napa Valley; 60% Cabernet Sauvignon; 25% Cabernet Franc; 15% Merlot; there are just 7.5 hectares of vines here in a property of 300 hectares; in effect 2 vineyards at 500 and 600 metres respectively, so an average altitude of around 550 metres; tiny yields here too and entirely 'dry farmed', the irrigation removed on purchase in 2016; aged in a combination of concrete tanks French oak barrels, mainly new; 15% alcohol; certified organic and biodynamic; the vines are now around 35 years of age; tasted at Pontet Canet with Justine and Noé Tesseron). The fifth vintage of this wine and the second to be certified both organic and biodynamic. This is also, impressively, the product of dry farming, showing that it is possible even here, aided by the irrigation system having been removed in 2016 (removing all temptation!) and the unique terroir. Gloriously cedar-encrusted with loads of graphite too and, with aeration, a lovely bulbous Cabernet Franc florality. Very bordelais in its style and in its finesse, but radiant with a distinctly Californian sunshine ('solaire'). Black cherry and cassis, bramble and above all mulberry, a touch of blueberry too. More and more cassis with aeration. A hint of liquorice. Chocolate ganache. Spearmint. Eucalyptus. A lovely hint of beeswax. Saffron too. Distinct in its terroir singularity and with lots of character and identity. Herbal and mineral at the same time, but less saline than it used to be. The freshness is key here and it comes both with attention to detail and the altitude of the vines - with 15 degrees of difference in temperature between the day and the night here and, indeed, three weeks' difference in the picking dates between the two plots (separated only by 100 metres of elevation). There's lovely crystallinity here too contributing to a beautiful mouthfeel. Supple and lithe, tactile and dynamic, with lovely subtle crumbly tannins. Svelte and very pure, less ample than the 2019 perhaps, giving this more impact. A wine that copes so well with the heat of the vintage, remaining profoundly fresh from the altitude. Super-juicy. Tender and sapid on the finish, with little ripples of ascending tannic grip that seems to unleash, one after another, the descending crash of fresh fruit onto the shore. I am struck as never before, and above all in this challenging vintage, the Tesseron signature.



96

This is so aromatic, with aromas of black fruit, mushrooms, pencil shavings, bark, blackberries and orange peel. So enticing. Medium- to full-bodied with a linear and lightly dusty tannin structure that coats the mouth beautifully and leaves your palate clean and energized. Fine-textured tannins. Well done for a complicated vintage. From biodynamically grown grapes with Demeter certification. Very drinkable now, but structured for aging. Drink or hold.



**The Wine
Independent**

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The 2020 Pym-Rae is a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, and 25% Cabernet Franc. Opaque purple-black color, it's a little closed and broody to start, offering earthy/savory notes of tar, black olives, black truffles, and Sichuan pepper, giving way to a core of red currant jelly and blackberry pie, plus touches of underbrush and dried lavender. The full-bodied palate delivers a rock-solid structure of grainy tannins and bold freshness to support the taut, muscular black fruits, finishing long and earthy.

The spectacular 2018 and 2019 vintages from this estate were always going to be tough acts to follow, especially given all the challenges of 2020. Nonetheless, this is a delicious beauty that speaks of place and time.

Owned by Château Pontet-Canet owner, Alfred Tesseron, the Pym-Rae vineyard consists of nearly 20 acres of mature Cabernet Sauvignon (75%), Merlot (18%), and Cabernet Franc (7%) vines, planted in 1990. Tesseron named the estate and wine Pym-Rae out of respect for the original name given to the vineyard by Robin Williams (Pym and Rae are the middle names of two of Williams's children). The site is perched in a secluded location at an average altitude of 1,500 feet (500 meters) on Mount Veeder. Until Tesseron purchased the land, the fruit from the vineyard was sold to large wineries and blended away in Napa Valley AVA wines. Currently, the wines are made at a dedicated cellar on Howell Mountain.

Reviewed by: **Lisa Perrotti-Brown**

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Source: **2021 Napa Valley Vintage Report and New Releases**