

# Wine & Spirits

## MARTIN RAY WINERY VOTED *Winery of the Year*



Bryan Davison



### MARTIN RAY



*Martin Ray*  
**WINERY**

#### TOP-SCORING WINES

- |           |  |             |
|-----------|--|-------------|
| <b>94</b> | '03 Sonoma Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon                 | \$55 (2/07) |
| <b>92</b> | '04 Stags Leap District Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon | \$40 (8/07) |
| <b>90</b> | '03 Diamond Mountain Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon    | \$60 (2/07) |

Courtney Benham purchased the Martin Ray brand in 1990 but didn't turn his attention to it until he sold his other wine concern, Blackstone, in 2001. He soon adopted one of Martin Ray's original passions: namely, mountain wines. Over a long career from 1936 to his death 40 years later, Ray stubbornly professed that mountain vineyards made the best wines.

Ray's winery was based in the Santa Cruz Mountains, which have been the source of estimable reds since Monte Bello was planted in 1885. Benham decided to use mountain-grown fruit from all over the North Coast in his reserves, including historical plantings such as Van der Kamp on Sonoma Mountain, Cooper-Garrod and Fellom Ranches in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and an impressive new source, the Constant Vineyard on Diamond Mountain.

Benham's winemaker, Bryan Davison, who was hired in 2003, also takes a cue from Ray in his efforts to highlight the characteristic flavors of each vineyard, "not cover them up with oak," he says. "It's kind of a stand."

We're delighted to stand with him. These cabernets don't taste like every other cabernet; they don't taste like each other, either. Each is distinct. The Santa Cruz Mountain bottling is appropriately reticent, the Diamond Mountain and Stags Leap wines are riveting, the former mineral and precise, the latter more generous, with an intriguing black-spice scent.

And the 2003 Sonoma Mountain Cabernet is the most powerfully built of all, mineral and firm. Decanting brings out a surprising delicacy in the wine, its minerality supporting a fine, deep wild berry flavor. The mountain readily shows through the fruit: The founding winemaker would approve. —P.J.C.



## Winter 2007

**Founded:** 1990 **Winemaker:** Bryan Davison  
**Acres owned:** 6.5 **Annual production:** 56,600  
**Estate grown:** 1% **Owner:** Courtney Benham  
**Known for:** Distinctive, mountain-grown Cabernet Sauvignon brand  
**Location:** Santa Rosa, CA  
**Website:** martinraywinery.com