

**Sandstone Cellars Winery****2005 II
(Texas)**

At the Texas Fall Fest & Auction, Ed Auler, owner of Fall Creek Winery and one of the Hill Country's wine pioneers, asked me, "Have you tried that Sandstone wine?" I hadn't. "You better hurry up. That's one of the best red wines I've ever had from Texas." Given the fact that Ed Auler has made some of the best red wine in Texas for over three decades, that's a pretty big compliment.

I have to admit, I'm not surprised. Sandstone's winemaker, Don Pullum, is a smart guy who did well in banking but decided he just wouldn't be happy unless he had his feet in the mud most days of the week. He has focused his entire life around wine for the last

several years, learning tough lessons from experience.

For instance, Don grew spectacular Grenache, but lost his own vineyards to freezes and hail. So he joined up with restaurateurs Scott Hauptert and Manny Silerio to plant vines and create the wines of Sandstone Cellars. Each year, their wines have been getting better as the vines get older and Don learns more. It was only a matter of time until he hit a home run.

"II" (flashy name, eh?) is a combo of Mediterranean grapes that grow beautifully in the Texas Hill Country. It's 27 percent Touriga, 23 percent Mourvedre, 20 percent Syrah, 12 percent Barbera, 12 percent Sangiovese, 4 percent Primitivo and 1 percent Grenache. The Touriga is especially important in the blend. If the U.S. ever develops a taste for Touriga, the Texas Hill Country might be to it what Oregon is to Pinot Noir.

II is not your California big buster jam bomb. It's closer in structure and weight to a Rhone with just a hint of vanilla from some very expensive oak. Don and company just took a Bronze Medal for non-Bordeaux blend at the San Francisco International Wine Competition, even though at \$30, II was one of the cheapest bottles in its flight. Don only made a few cases and Texans are snapping it up pretty quickly. This wine deserves your attention.

Reviewed February 6, 2008 by [Wes Marshall](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Sandstone Cellars Winery](#)

Vintage: 2005

Wine: II

Appellation: Texas

Grapes: Touriga Nacional (27%), Mourvedre / Mataro (23%), Syrah / Shiraz (20%), Barbera (12%), Sangiovese (12%), Primitivo (4%)

Price: \$30.00

THE REVIEWER**Wes Marshall**

Wes Marshall is the wine writer for the *Austin Chronicle* where his column turned into the inspiration for a book, "The Wine Roads of Texas," which in turn has now become a three-part PBS documentary. His never-ending search is for value wines – be they \$10 a

bottle or \$100 – which he defines as tasting better than most other wines at twice the price. As wines become more homogenized, he has been a keen advocate of appellation-specific flavors and aromas, and always marks up for luxurious mouthfeel.