



Media

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2011 Agriculturalist of the Year

The San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau Board of Directors is proud to announce the 2011 Agriculturalist of the Year, Justin Smith.

On July 21, 2011, the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau honored Justin Smith as the 2011 recipient of the Agriculturalist of the Year award. In appreciation of his dedication to agriculture and for taking James Berry Vineyard and the agriculture of Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo County to new heights.

As a second-generation farmer, Justin moved to Paso Robles with his parents, James and Terry Smith, from San Diego County in 1980. His father purchased a 55-acre parcel, a double wide trailer and a barn with the intention of growing grapes. Justin learned from his parents who cultivated the land by personally planting every vine, digging every posthole and pruning every cane.

Justin is the winemaker of Saxum Vineyards, which he and his wife, Heather Smith, established in 2002. In 2010 he received a 100-point score from Robert Parker for his 2007 vintage James Berry Vineyard Proprietary Red, demonstrating the fullest potential of the region. This accolade affects the reputation of the entire Paso Robles wine making community. Justin also received (for the same vintage) *Wine Spectator's* prestigious Wine of the Year award, being the only Paso Robles wine to ever achieve this award. Alongside his mentor and father, James Berry Smith, Justin has maintained strict standards of sustainable vineyard farming working the land by hand.

Justin's 2010 honor of a perfect score from Robert Parker, and *Wine Spectator's* Wine of the Year award for his 2007 vintage creates worldwide notoriety for Paso Robles and its agricultural potential. Justin is a visionary who has changed the region and has set the bar high for himself and his peers with an inherited motivation and desire to continue to improve his yield and quality as a winemaker and as a farmer. He remains focused on his responsibilities balancing his time in the vineyard, cellar and a home with his family.

In an article discussing his award-winning wine, *The Los Angeles Times* reported, 'Justin says, "Twenty years ago, we definitely couldn't have made this quality of wine. It took that 20 years of experimenting and figuring out exactly what does work in these soils and how to plant the vines, and that's been our biggest obstacle. You can't look to

France to see what works because we have a California climate, and you can't look to Napa because it has fertile valley soils.

"You can't make a good wine from bad grapes, and I'm very focused on the vineyard," he adds. "That's where I make my wines."

Justin and Heather and their three children live in Paso Robles, where Saxum Winery is an extension of their knowledge, their intuition, their observation and their patience as farmers.

We are honored to say that Justin Smith is agricultures' future and a star in the agricultural community. Thank you, Justin for your dedication.

For a complete article on the *Wine Spectator* award to Justin Smith, go to www.winespector.com/033111 March 2011 issue.

Mission Statement:

"To lead San Luis Obispo County in the protection, promotion and advocacy of Agriculture for the benefit of our members and community"