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The International Wine Review

California Zinfandel: A New Look

Foreword by Joel Peterson



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Foreward

Zinfandel has a long history in California. Much of that history is about adaptation to changing circumstance. The last 40 years have brought more change to the style and quality of the wines made from Zinfandel than ever before. Hence, while much has been written about this grape and its wine over the years, it is a bit surprising that a comprehensive up-to-date synopsis of its history in California, the growing regions that it inhabits, the winemakers who have wholeheartedly embraced it, or the excellent wines that are crafted from Zinfandel has not emerged. Fortunately that has changed with this report.

As the modern California wine business has emerged from the late 1960's the skill of its winemakers, the understanding of viticulture, wine making technology and consumer enthusiasm have all reach levels never before achieved. This has benefited Zinfandel greatly. Its ancient DNA has found a comfortable fit in the evolving California wine scene. The wines are better, at all levels, than they have ever been.

The current review of California Zinfandel from the good people at the *International Wine Review* could not come at a more opportune time. They have written a thorough review of the current state of Zinfandel in California, its history, growing regions, winemakers, wineries and of course, its wine. While I cannot endorse the scores given the wines, as they are entirely the opinion of the *International Wine Review*. I enthusiastically embrace the informational content contained in this report. The review is interesting, well researched and worthwhile reading for all those who care about fine red wine, especially Zinfandel.

Joel Peterson

Acknowledgements.

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Introduction



Kunde's Century Vines in Sonoma Valley

Zinfandel is America's grape. For well over 150 years this "heritage grape" has been widely planted in California and is today producing outstanding wines of great diversity and character. No grape has had a more enthusiastic following by American consumers than Zinfandel. Viz the annual Grand Tastings of Zinfandel held in San Francisco organized by the Zinfandel Advocates and Producers (ZAP). This past February's event saw more than 1500 attendees taste over 600 different Zinfandels poured from several of California's growing regions.

Notwithstanding its current popularity among wine enthusiasts, Zinfandel has had a checkered history. In the late 19th and early 20th century it was the most widely planted variety in California, but in the years following Prohibition it was slowly replaced by Cabernet Sauvignon as California's premier red variety. In the 1970s and 80s, white Zinfandel was a spectacular commercial success, while serious, red Zinfandel was beginning to gain ground. Today, Zinfandel is again flourishing due to a combination of factors that are the focus of this report.

Although Zinfandel is grown in 45 of California's 58 counties, from Mendocino to Temecula and the Sierra foothills to the valleys and coastal mountains near the Pacific, its best expression is concentrated in several major growing regions: Napa Valley, Lodi, Paso Robles, the Sierra Foothills and the counties of Mendocino, Contra Costa, and, especially, Sonoma (see map in Annex 1). Our report provides overviews of the favorable growing conditions in each region, the vineyards, and the noteworthy producers. Readers will gain an appreciation of the exciting variety of Zinfandels being produced today and the high quality of winemaking in each region.

The growers and winemakers of Zinfandel are blessed with a wide array of old vines, some like the Grandpere

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in Amador County dating back to the late 1860s. These old vineyards are primarily head pruned and dry farmed, producing grapes that are unique and intensely flavored. More than any other variety, Zinfandel delivers "history in a glass." Its 100+ year old vineyards are vinous treasures that yield some of the world's most unique wines that are often produced in small volume with limited distribution. Many are also field blends with other grapes such as Carignan, Alicante Bouschet and Petite Sirah and offer a myriad of terroir-driven flavors with unique components of earthy, spicy notes with hints of briar, licorice and slate. Our report identifies the most important of these old vineyards and the wines being made from them by California's talented Zinfandel winemakers. An annotated listing is provided in Annex 2.

Most of today's Zinfandel producers are crafting high quality wines that are improvements over the past. They are managing the vineyard to get more uniform ripening, picking grapes at lower Brix to avoid over-ripeness and retain acidity, using a higher percentage of French oak, and, in general, crafting wines that are lively and fresh. While alcohol levels will always be high relative to some varieties, the wines are balanced and rarely show alcoholic heat. The reviews and ratings of over 350 Zinfandels in the final section of the report support these conclusions.

Zinfandel is a versatile and expressive varietal. There are different styles of Zinfandel on the market that pair beautifully with a wide variety of dishes. The bold dark-fruited flavors of Zinfandels make them ideal for pairing with beef. Red-fruit flavored, spicy and well-balanced Zinfandels are wonderful with lamb, pork and poultry and shine with pizza and pasta dishes. Zinfandels also pair

well with different cheeses as part of a meal or on their own. Our report provides tips on which dishes pair well with Zinfandel.

Today California Zinfandel has never been better. The wines are of a very high quality, unique and, most importantly, prices remain reasonable compared to other varieties. For consumers, members of the trade, and the media, there could be no better time to explore the exciting variety of Zinfandels on the market. This report is a good guide with which to begin that exploration.

History of Zinfandel in California



The Original Grandpere Vineyard in Amador's Shenandoah Valley

Until recently, Zinfandel was considered a "mystery grape" because its origins were unknown. First, the 19th century myth that Agostin Haraszthy introduced Zinfandel to California from his native Hungary was debunked. Research confirmed that Zinfandel and Southern Italy's Primitivo grape are genetically the same, suggesting Zinfandel might have originated in Italy. Only recently did genetic research confirm that Zinfandel's ancestral home is in fact Croatia (see box).

According to wine historian Charles L. Sullivan, Zinfandel was very likely imported to Long Island and Boston in the 1820s, making its way to northern California nurseries during the Gold Rush of the late 1840s and 1850s, where prospectors working the Gold Rush planted it enthusiastically¹. Eventually, Zinfandel became widely planted throughout Northern California due to its high yields, its adaptability to different soils and climates, and its obvious superiority to the Mission grape that until then dominated California viticulture.

¹ Charles L. Sullivan (2003), *Zinfandel: A History of a Grape and its Wine*, University of California Press.



Zinfandel's Ancestral Home

Until recently, wine enthusiasts considered Italy to be Zinfandel's ancestral home since Apulia's Primitivo grape is genetically similar to Zinfandel. However, in 2001 a team of researchers led by Professor Carole Meredith (shown here) of UC Davis discovered a grape called Crijenak Kastelanski, a genetic twin

to Zinfandel, growing along the Dalmatian Coast. Tribidag was at one time a popular variety in Croatia, but it almost died out due to phylloxera. Today, vines identically similar to Zinfandel are rarely found in Croatia, but Ridge Vineyards has worked with the UC Davis Foundation Plant Services to import plant material to California for testing and experimentation.²

Zinfandel followed several routes in making its way to California. Frederick Macondray brought it in (as a table grape) as early as 1852. Anthony P. Smith imported Zinfandel to his Sacramento gardens in 1853, and cuttings from his vines made their way to the vineyards being planted in the Sierra Foothills about that time. Antoine Delmas, a French nurseryman, also imported vines from France and from New England, including Zinfandel (although, he called it Black St. Peters). He sent cuttings to Sonoma in the mid 1850s, where it ended up in William McPherson Hill's Glen Ellen vineyard and became part of the blend in Buena Vista's Sonoma Red Wine. In Napa, vintner Joseph Osborne obtained Zinfandel cuttings from Macondray and grafted them onto Mission rootstock³. Osborne's success with Zinfandel and other varieties came to the attention of the Sonoma Horticultural Society, which was presided over by Agoston Haraszthy, and Osborne sent them cuttings in 1853. By 1867, William McPherson Hill was making a Zinfandel wine in Sonoma that was one of California's first cult wines. In that same year the US Department of Agriculture praised the variety, and Zinfandel soon replaced the Mission grape as California's most planted and most important.

² Shortly after his arrival in Napa Valley, the illustrious winemaker, Mike Grgich, himself a Croatian, saw Zinfandel vines for the first time growing in Yountville and thought he was back home in Croatia. He was so convinced of the origin of Zinfandel that he later reputedly urged Carole Meredith to undertake her DNA research in Croatia.

³ While not directly involved in the cultivation of Zinfandel, another important actor in its growth was General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, comandante general of the Mexican Army in California. His French physician Victor Faure planted Zinfandel from Osborne's cuttings in 1863, later making wine that captured the attention of other Sonoma vintners, as reported in David Darlington's book *Angels' Visits* (Henry Holt, 1991).

Zinfandel really came into its own in the late 19th century. California wine production tripled in the 1880s, partly the result of reduced French imports as a result of the phylloxera epidemic there, and Zinfandel was the most widely planted variety. Zinfandel was especially popular in Sonoma County where an estimated 80 percent of new plantings were to this variety⁴. It was even more popular in Napa County, which had almost 6 thousand acres of Zinfandel by 1887.

From the 1860's to the turn of the century, California's wine industry grew rapidly in response to the increasing demand for wine in San Francisco and in the boomtowns in Amador County and the Sierra Foothills. Hundreds of vineyards and wineries, large and small, sprouted up in Napa Valley, the Russian River Valley, Dry Creek Valley, and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Indeed, the real gold in the Foothills turned out to be Zinfandel (see box). With the expansion of vineyard plantings, Zinfandel became the leading variety in the production of red table wines, industry, and by 1890 it covered over 35 thousand acres.

CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH 1849



California's Real Gold Rush: Zinfandel.

The discovery of gold in the Sierra Foothills in 1848 transformed California. Prospectors and merchants

from around the world came to California's gold country. Fiddletown became home to the largest Chinese population outside San Francisco. Drytown, just south of Plymouth, had 26 saloons. Leland Stanford earned a fortune and later used it to found Stanford University. But the real gold in the Foothills turned out to be Zinfandel. John James Davis joined the rush but ended up planting Zinfandel grapes. His 100+ year old vines, now owned by descendant Ken Deaver, produced the fruit for the 1968 Sutter Home Zinfandel that put Amador County on the Zinfandel map. Another Foothill Zinfandel pioneer was Genoan immigrant Giovanni Lombardo, who started the Lombardo Winery in El Dorado County in 1863; it is now the Boeger Winery.

In the 1880s the phylloxera root louse slowly began to destroy California's vineyards. Growers had to replant their vineyards, grafting vines on to phylloxera-resistant rootstocks like St. George. Zinfandel vines were among the first replanted after phylloxera, but other varieties like Carignan, Cinsault, Mondeuse, and Petite Sirah were also planted. Since Sonoma Valley was the first area hit by phylloxera, it was also the first to be replanted and today

is home to California's oldest Zinfandel vines on rootstock. The remoteness of the Sierra Foothills spared many of its vineyards as did the deep sand of Contra Costa County, both of which still have old, self-rooted, pre-phylloxera Zinfandel vineyards.

Prohibition and its Aftermath⁵

Prohibition from 1920--1932 had an even more serious adverse impact than phylloxera on the California wine industry, and its effects lasted much longer. Prohibition made illegal the manufacture, sale or transport of intoxicating liquors until its repeal in 1933. It thus ruined many of the region's wineries but worked to the advantage of growers who shipped Zinfandel and Alicante Bouschet grapes east to home winemakers who were allowed to produce 200 gallons of "non-intoxicating cider and fruit juice" under the law. Nonetheless, Prohibition brought about massive abandonment of vineyards. Relative to other varietals, however, Zinfandel survived Prohibition well, owing to its popularity among home winemakers. Still, the approximately 77 thousand acres of California Zinfandel that existed in 1919 was a high point for the grape.

Prohibition destroyed wineries, winemaking knowledge, and consumer knowledge and sophistication about wine. After Repeal, consumers turned to fortified wines and generic, jug wines. The few Zinfandels were light and fruity and sold in California. The national market for Zinfandel had disappeared. The renown wine writer and merchant Frank Schoonmaker was one of Zinfandel's few advocates. Charles Sullivan reports that he was most impressed with the Louis Martini Zinfandel made from its Monte Rosso vineyard.

Post World War II consumers gradually began drinking more dry table wines, and wineries started putting varietal names on premium bottles. Several wineries made premium Zinfandel in the 1950s, including Souverain, Buena Vista, Parducci, Mirassou, and, of course, Louis Martini. There were also numerous small, boutique producers.

⁴ Sullivan, p. 42.

⁵ Many conversations, books, and articles inform this section, but by far the most important is Charles Sullivan's book *Zinfandel*.

The Re-Emergence of Zinfandel

RIDGE
CALIFORNIA
ZINFANDEL
FIDDLETOWN
1974

Zinfandel's real rebirth began in the 1960s, and Ridge Vineyards was one of the first. Founded in 1962 by a group of Stanford Research Institute researchers with little knowledge of winemaking, Ridge was best known for its estate Cabernet Sauvignon

Monte Bello and its Zinfandels during its first decade. According to Sullivan, it produced 21 different Zinfandels in the 1960s, including the old vineyard designated Geyersville in 1966. After winemaker Paul Draper joined Ridge in 1969, its Zinfandel program expanded further, including Lytton Spring beginning in 1972 and extending to vineyards in Paso Robles, Lodi, and Amador. About the same time, Sutter Home began making old vine Zinfandel in Amador County. Released in 1971, the 1968 Sutter Home Zinfandel sourced from the Deaver Ranch received rave reviews that started a steady flow of winemakers to Amador seeking its special old vine grapes.

In 1968 Joe Swan also began making Zinfandel from his 13-acre Forestville farm in the Russian River Valley. Confident that Zinfandel could become



Joel Peterson, Joe Swan, & André Tchelistcheff in the early 1970s

a world class red wine, he used French methods to craft both intensely flavored Zinfandels as well as more elegant, restrained ones. He sought out special old vineyards, like Teldeschi in Dry Creek Valley. And in one of his more prescient moves, he took on the young Joel Peterson as apprentice winemaker in 1972. Joel learned from Joe Swan (and others) the art of traditional winemaking as practiced in France: picking grapes by taste, farming for less fruit, using wild yeast, fermenting long and warm, and aging in French oak.

Numerous individuals have contributed to the modern revival of Zinfandel. We discuss several of them below. Space does not permit us to write about all those who have made significant contributions, like Jerry Seps of Storybook Mountain Vineyard, Ken and Diane Wilson of Wilson Artisan Wineries, the Seghesio family, the Martinelli family, and many others.



While there have been many pioneering figures in Zinfandel's world, it's difficult to think of one who has had greater impact than Joel Peterson. During his early career as a medical researcher, he decided to become a winemaker and had the good fortune to apprentice with Joe Swan. From there he went on to found Ravenswood with Reed Foster in 1976. The first Ravenswood wines were made in Joe Swan's winery and were vineyard-designated from the beginning. In 1992 he was finally able to quit his day job and devote full time to making wine. He recruited the best growers to provide grapes to his winery, and the rest is, as they say, history. Joel is a founding member and past president (twice) of ZAP and has played a leading role in the Sonoma County wine industry.

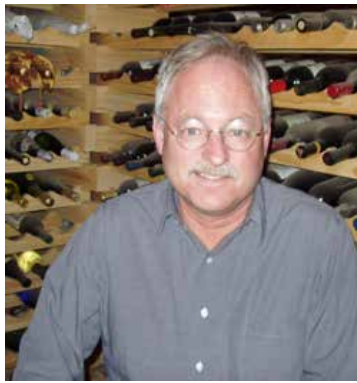
In 1978 Kent Rosenblum, another one of California's great Zinfandel producers of all time, launched Rosenblum Cellars, located in the city of Alameda, just east of San Francisco. Unlike most vintners in California at the time who focused on estate grown wines, Kent looked for unrecognized and underappreciated grape-growing areas. His efforts showcased differences between mountainside and valley floor grapes, the importance of soil types and their influence on the taste of a wine. Kent was also fascinated by the character and complexity of old vine Zinfandel and aimed to capture them in the bottle. At its peak, Rosenblum Cellars crafted more than 50 premium Zinfandels that won high praise from consumers and the media alike.



Carol Shelton is among a small group of pioneering women winemakers in California. In 1974 she attended UC Davis where she studied enology and carried out research on yeast strains and their different flavor

characteristics. Early in her career she experienced resistance and prejudice towards women working in the cellar. However, she forged a career as a winemaker in Sonoma County working at Rodney Strong and Windsor Vineyards. In 2000 she started her own winery handcrafting Zinfandels from exceptional vineyards throughout California.

Growing up in California's Sierra Foothills, Scott Harvey developed a keen interest in winemaking. After acquiring practical enology training at Montevina Winery in Amador County and the Fitz-Ritter Winery in Germany, he co-founded and served as winemaker at Renwood, producing wines that garnered critical acclaim and bringing recognition to Amador County as a wine-growing region. Scott has a passion for Zinfandel, which he produces under his own label, Scott Harvey Wines, from Amador's famous Original Grandpère Vineyard and elsewhere in Amador County.



In the early 1990s in Paso Robles, Doug Becket and wife Nancy established Peachy Canyon, a family owned and operated winery that made Zinfandel its flagship variety. Doug released his first wine in 1990 and soon gained wide recognition for his flavorful and well-

priced Westside Zinfandel. It would be 12 years before he could afford to quit his day job, but by then Doug's winery had grown substantially. In time, Peachy Canyon acquired four vineyards, starting in 1996 with Snow Estate followed by, Mustard Creek Vineyard, Mustang Springs, and Old Schoolhouse. In the early years of the winery, Doug's son Josh served as winemaker and son Jake took care of sales and marketing. Later, veteran winemaker, Robert Henson was recruited as Peachy Canyon's winemaker.



The Birth of White Zinfandel

In the early 1970s, with the encouragement of Sacramento grocer, Darrell Corti, Bob Trinchero of Sutter Home Winery made a dry rosé which he labeled "Oeil de Pedrix:

White Wine Zinfandel", made from the free-run juice that was bled off during crushing to further concentrate his red Zinfandel. In 1972 the fermentation of Oeil de Perdrix stuck, leaving a wine with 2 percent residual sugar that Trinchero marketed, thus initiating the White Zinfandel craze. This led to increased plantings of Zinfandel, especially in warmer growing areas of the Central Valley. In Lodi, Tokay vines were grafted over to make way for White Zinfandel. By the 1980s there were over 115 brands of White Zinfandel (nicknamed "Chateau Cash Flow" by happy growers) on the market, and Sutter Home was producing 4 million cases of the wine by the mid-1990s. However, Sutter Home's was not California's first White Zinfandel. That honor lies with a Stockton winery called El Pinal, which was reportedly making a light pink Zinfandel as early as 1858.



Tegan Passalacqua and Larry Turley

In 1993 Larry Turley, co-founder of Frog's Leap, terminated his partnership with John Williams and established Larry Turley Wine

Cellars, one of California's most significant ventures to preserve and bottle old vine Zinfandel. Larry's sister, Helen, was already known for her Napa Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay when her brother asked her to produce an old vine Zinfandel. She employed her signature winemaking style until Ehren Jordan became winemaker in 1995, and Turley Zinfandel became synonymous with wines combining power and refinement. With Tegan Passalacqua, his winemaker since 2003, Larry currently produces some 35 different Zinfandels, all organically farmed and mostly from very old head-trained vineyards. Today's wines reflect their vineyard designations and breeding.

⁶ Louis (Bob) Trinchero, "California Zinfandels, a Success Story," an oral history conducted in 1991 by Carole Hicke, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1992.

The New Generation

A new generation of skilled producers and winemakers came on the scene at the turn of the century. Most of the new generation are from winemaking families and were educated at Cal Poly and UC Davis. Others acquired experience and on-the-job training at wineries in California and abroad.



Some like Morgan Twain-Peterson, son of Zinfandel pioneer, Joel Peterson, learned about wine at early age. After studying and working in New York, France and

Australia, Morgan returned to Sonoma in 2007 where he established Bedrock Vineyards. Morgan is widely recognized for crafting outstanding old vine Zinfandels and championing the preservation of old vineyards by co-founding the Historic Vineyard Society with David Gates, Mike Dildine, and Mike Officer, another of Zinfandel's very accomplished younger generation [see box on Mike Officer and his Carlisle Winery later in this report].

As noted above, Tegan Passalacqua is the winemaker at Turley Wine Cellars. He honed his winemaking and viticultural skills via travel and working harvests in France, New Zealand, and South Africa. He began making wine at Turley in 2003, working along side Ehren Jordan. He is a dynamic and highly knowledgeable vigneron who has great passion and inexhaustible energy when it comes to vineyard management and winemaking. We learned a great deal from Tegan about Zinfandel during the time we spent with him preparing this report.



Katie Matigan, winemaker at St. Francis, oversees the production of Zinfandel and other wines. A key member of St Francis Winery's production and winemaking team for nearly 15 years, she is a graduate in Chemistry from the University of California, Santa Barbara. In 2015 Katie was awarded "Best Woman Winemaker" by the International Women's Wine Competition. She also won Zinfandel

producer of the year in 2014 and 2015 at the California Zinfandel Championship.



Courtesy of Limerick Lane

Jake Bilbro (on the right) and brother Scot are the dynamic duo behind the highly successful Limerick Lane Cellars, a small family owned winery in Russian River Valley producing some of the finest Zinfandels in Sonoma County. Jake and Scot's partnership was

forged at Marietta Cellars, which was founded in Geyserville by their father Chris. Since taking over Limerick Lane in 2011 they have released exciting wines that are both opulent and reveal a sense of place. Their future looks highly promising.

Andrew Nalle, winemaker at Nalle Winery is the fifth generation of this small family-owned winery in Dry Creek Valley. Andrew is the son of Doug Nalle (left,) founder of the winery and one of the pioneers of California Zinfandel. Along with his studies in Enology and Viticulture, Andrew brings artistic sensitivity and passion to his winemaking.



In Amador County, Joe Shebl came on the winemaking scene in 1999. After finishing a degree in Biology and Chemistry from Sacramento State University, he started his career in the cellar at Renwood Winery where he has since held every production position. He is currently responsible for all aspects of winemaking and production as well as the day to day management of the winery. He is expert at

making Zinfandel, crafting wines of power and finesse.

Shauna Rosenblum and her Zin-master father, Kent Rosenblum, are today partners in a new winemaking adventure called



Rock Wall Wine Company. The company is located in Alameda where Shauna serves as designated winemaker and Kent as CEO. Shauna is utilizing grapes from some of the finest vineyards in California to craft her wines. She literally grew up in the cellar and spent her childhood in wineries learning about making wine from her father. Her wines are bold and flavorful like her father's except they also show a somewhat more refined and artistic side.



In Paso Robles Janell Dusi is producing outstanding Zinfandels and other wines from her 100-acre family estate. Her family settled in Paso in the 1920s and sold grapes to other wineries. At the age of 13, Janell developed a passion for winemaking and set about acquiring winemaking skills through on the job training in South Australia and in Paso working with Austin Hope and other producers. In 2006 she established J Dusi Wines, crafting her wines at other facilities until she

built her own winery in 2013. Today, Janell produces around 4 thousand cases annually following traditional winemaking techniques inspired by Ridge. Her wines are flavorful and restrained in style.

The growth of interest in premium red Zinfandel by producers and consumers led to the formation in 1992 of a new non-profit organization called Zinfandel Advocates and Producers (ZAP). From



its establishment to the present day, Zap has played a seminal role as an advocacy group for Zinfandel. Its work program has consisted of seminars, educational activities and tastings across the U.S. to promote Zinfandel. In preparing this report we attended ZAP's annual three-day Zinfandel Experience in San Francisco consisting of seminars and wine tastings on Zinfandel. We were simply amazed by the vitality and excitement of the event, which annually attracts thousands of Zinfandel lovers. ZAP also carries out several other vital activities on behalf of Zinfandel producers and consumers. In collaboration with UC Davis it supports the preservation of historic vineyards and improvements in clonal material. It also conducts local and regional seminars and tastings to educate consumers, retailers and restaurateurs about Zinfandel.

Zinfandel in the Vineyard

California's Zinfandel wines keep getting better and better. Higher quality wines are due to improvements in viticulture and winemaking. In this section we discuss the challenges of growing Zinfandel and the many changes that vineyard managers have made to produce grapes that have phenolic ripeness while retaining freshness. In the next section of the report we discuss the contributions of better winemaking to the significant improvements in the quality of Zinfandel wine over the years.

Zinfandel, The Grape

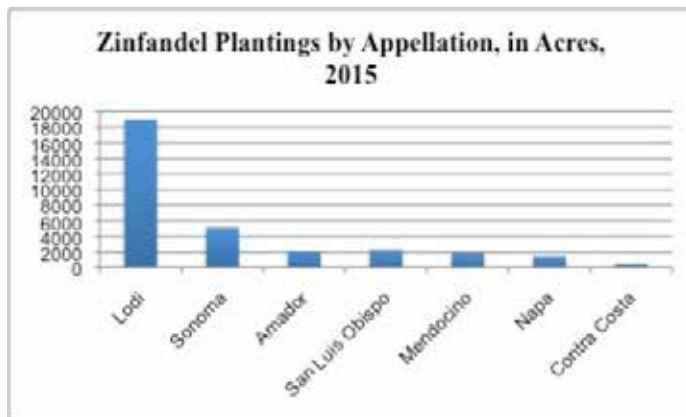


Lizzie James Vineyard, Lodi, Planted 1904 (©RC)

Zinfandel is a vigorous vine that produces high yields (when young and planted in fertile soils) of thin-skinned grapes in large, tight bunches that makes them susceptible to rot in damp conditions and to shriveling in hot, dry weather. The grapes ripen fairly early with high sugar content, leading to wines of relatively high alcohol level. They can ripen especially rapidly in the middle of a heat wave.

Zinfandel bunches are also subject to millerandage (hens and chicks) with grapes of varying levels of ripeness—small green berries, raisined fruit, and normal grapes. This can lead to high alcohol levels in the wines as the dried berries have high sugar content. Careful canopy management combined with low crop levels and early picking can keep alcohol levels in check. Overcropping and uneven ripening can also be minimized by fruit thinning such as cutting off “wings or shoulders”.

Head-trained old vine Zinfandel can differ greatly from younger Zinfandel vines trained on vertical trellises. Old bush vines have naturally low yields, somewhat thicker skins, deep roots that help them survive hot dry weather, and dappled shading that protects grapes from desiccation. As a result, the best Zinfandel wines are made from the many old vineyards of Zinfandel still found in California (see Annex 2).



Zinfandel is widely grown in California. At last count, 45 counties reported plantings of Zinfandel, and countless small producers were making single varietal Zinfandels and blends, sometimes in remote areas. As shown in the graph, there were 46 thousand acres of Zinfandel planted in 2015, but those plantings were concentrated in relatively few counties. It is worth noting that over 40 percent of all Zinfandel is grown in the Lodi appellation, which encompasses parts of two counties and has a combination of large, high yielding vineyards and small, low yielding old vine Zinfandel vineyards. The former provide fruit for high volume generic blends and white Zinfandel, while the latter are used to create some of California’s outstanding red Zinfandels.

Planting & Trellising

As with any other grape variety, growers face questions about where and how to plant. Also, like most other varieties, Zinfandel produces the most flavorful grapes

when planted on meager, well-drained soils with good sun exposure in moderate/warm climates. The grape’s weakness for rot also requires good ventilation, so drying breezes are also essential. Although most newer Zinfandel vineyards are irrigated today, California’s old vine Zinfandel was dry-farmed, so adequate winter rainfall as in Russian River Valley and/or a high water table as in Lodi was in the past essential. Dry farming also requires that vines be planted with wide spacing (10x10 or similar) to prevent over-competition for scarce water.

Rootstock.

Old vine Zinfandel is almost all either self-rooted or grafted to St. George (*vitis rupestris*) rootstock, which was popular and widely available during post-phylloxera replanting in the late 19th and early 20th century. Some old vines are also grafted to the Lenoir rootstock that was popular in the 19th century. Most new plantings of Zinfandel today also use St. George, although others are also used. St. George has the advantage that it sets less berries per cluster relative to other rootstocks, an advantage when it comes to the tightly clustered Zinfandel variety. There’s also an advantage to using a rootstock where the virus interactions between the variety and the rootstock are already known. St. George’s exceptionally deep rooting system also helps in drought prone areas where much of California’s Zinfandel is planted.

Trellising

Perhaps no topic is as widely debated among Zinfandel growers as trellising. The producers of high-end wines made from old vine fruit are zealous in their advocacy for head-trained bush vines. They claim they give filtered light that avoids sunburn and desiccation and produce moderate sized clusters that are less likely to suffer from rot. In addition, proper canopy management can keep the interior of the bush vine open and airy, further helping to avoid fungal issues. Mike Officer at Carlisle, for example, says he tries to create an umbrella over the fruit to provide dappled shade for the fruit and then removes leaves from the underside for good air circulation. Producers like Carlisle, Ridge and Turley are firm advocates of bush vines.

Others, like Jerry Sep at Storybook Mountain are in favor of vertical trellising, arguing that it gives more uniform exposure to sunlight, allows for better air flow to reduce the risk of rot, and contributes to more even ripening of the berries, which reduces raisining and its associated over-ripe flavors and harsh tannins. Vertical trellising has the added advantage that it allows for machine cultivation and harvesting, an increasingly important issue in labor-scarce California agriculture. Vertical trellising combined with irrigation can also give the high yields required for inexpensive, entry level wines and White Zinfandel.

Rehabilitating Old Vineyards

Zinfandel’s old vineyard sleuths, like Mike Officer of Carlisle, Morgan Twain Peterson of Bedrock and Joel

Peterson and Larry Turley, often come upon promising old parcels that have been abandoned or received minimum care and maintenance. Problems that need to be addressed include replacing dead or missing vines (i.e., interplanting), removing weeds and brush and rebuilding soils with cover crops and compost, and stimulating healthy roots by pruning the surface roots that have come about as owners have eliminated tilling to cut cultivation costs. Vineyard rehabilitation can dramatically increase yields over time from under 1 ton/acre to 3+ tons/acre.

The vineyard sleuths often make reference to Charles Darwin when discussing old vines. In their view, the old vineyards that remain in California are an example of the survival of the fittest. They've survived drought, the depression, Prohibition, changing tastes, and in some cases phylloxera because they are special, hardy vines that various owners have preserved while ripping out others in favor of more remunerative crops.

Old Vines Defined

California's Zinfandel producers frequently label their wines as "old vines", "ancient vines", and "heritage vines". Since none of these terms are regulated by the ATF, they mean whatever the producer decides⁷. For Joel Peterson, America's foremost authority on Zinfandel, old vines are those 50 to 80 years of age, and ancient vines are over age 80. David Gates of Ridge agrees that old vines should be at least 50 years of age. Sonoma's famed viticulturist Phil Coturri favors a more expansive definition of old vine Zinfandel as head pruned vines with generous spacing (8x8) planted on St George rootstock (or self rooted)⁸. Of course, in reality most all Zinfandel over age 50 meets Coturri's criteria.

There seems to be greatest consensus around the term "old vines" as being 50+ years of age, and that's the definition we use in this report. The term "heritage vines" is sometimes used to mean vines made from the cuttings of extremely old vines (e.g., the UC Davis Heritage Vineyard wines), sometimes used to mean a blend of old vines (e.g., Cline's Heritage Zinfandel) and is easily confused with "heirloom wines" which Morgan Twain Peterson uses for his mixed blacks from old vines. And the term "ancient vines" is seldom found on labels except for Cline's inexpensive Ancient Vines Zinfandel made from a mix of older and younger vines.

Looking abroad for guidance on defining old vines, Australia's Barossa Old Vine Charter, adopted in 2009, registers vineyards by age: old vine (35+ years old), survivor vine (70+ years), centenarian vine (100+ years), and ancestor vine (125+ years). Another example comes from Chile where like-minded vintners have joined together to agree on a common label (VIGNO) for Carignan above a certain age made in a specified manner. Can one imagine California's independent winemakers agreeing on a common term for wines made from head-pruned Zinfandel vines over 50 years of age?

⁷ This is not unusual in the world of wine. French producers frequently use the term "vieilles vignes" which has no regulated definition.

⁸ Sonoma County Winegrape Commission, "Sonoma County Old Vine Zinfandel: History in a Glass" May 2007.

Dry Farming



Sheep Mowing the Cover Crop

Most of California's vineyards were dry farmed before modern irrigation systems became widely available. Furrow flooding was done in locations like Lodi with abundant water, but in Sonoma, Napa, and elsewhere irrigation was the exception not the norm. Many of the state's old vine Zinfandel vineyards continue to be dry farmed as they were a century or more ago. These vines are planted with wide spacing on drought resistant rootstocks like St. George. They are deep-rooted in soils with good moisture-holding capacity and are self-regulating, with the crop level in balance relative to the growing season, which makes them resilient to drought and heat. However, given the high costs of hand cultivating and harvesting bush vines, the yields and grape prices of dry farmed Zinfandel have to be sufficiently high for them to be financially sustainable.

A number of growers introduced irrigation during the long, severe drought that just ended, both to avoid irreparable damage to their 100 year-old vines and to ensure financially sustainable yields. When winter rains are scarce, some growers give their vines a good drink to simulate normal rainfall and to help build up reserves for the coming heat. Almost all irrigation is drip except for Lodi where one often finds sub-surface irrigation pipes located about 18" below the surface at a location where the vine roots previously found their water from furrow flooding.

Organic Farming

There is, of course, an energetic movement in California to grow grapes using organic and sustainable viticulture practices. Lodi's Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing is an example of third party certification of sustainable vineyard and winery practices. The California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA) and its Code of Sustainability was introduced in 2003, and its standards and certification process are the basis for most county wide "green" certification processes. Organic viticulture practices are often used by California's Zinfandel growers, but most do not seek certification in order to have the flexibility to use chemical products in an eventual emergencies. Larry Turley is one important producer who is an exception. All of Turley's old vine vineyards are certified organic by California Certified Organic Farmers.

Cover Crops



Daikon Radish Used as Cover Crop in Lodi's Stampede Vineyard

Cover crops are almost universal in both head-trained and vertical trellised Zinfandel vineyards today. Leguminous cover crops like clover, peas, and fava beans help fix nitrogen in the soil and help growers avoid the use of chemical fertilizers. Cover crops are usually mowed or disked under in the spring to add organic matter to the soil and improve the ability of the vineyard to capture water and, also, raise the water holding capacity of the soil. Cover crops are, thus, essential to dry farming. In places where there is a high percentage of clay in the soil, Daikon radish and other plants with deep roots can help break up the hardpan. In situations where soils are too rich and vines too vigorous, cover crops can be encouraged during the growing season to reduce vigor and vine growth. In some areas, sheep are used to "mow" the cover crop and help clean up the vineyard.

Clonal Research

As noted earlier, Zinfandel's birthplace was Croatia's Dalmatian coast where the grape has been known as Tribidrag since at least the 15th century. It arrived in California around the time of the Gold Rush in the mid-1850s and was frequently planted in vineyards along with several other varieties, frequently referred to as "mixed blacks". Over the years, new vineyards were planted with whatever vines nurseries sold or from massal cuttings. UC Davis offered only four certified clones [FPS 01A, 02, 03, 06] of Zinfandel up until 1998⁹. The lack of clones is partly due to the genetic stability of the grape but it's also due to a lack of interest on the part of growers and researchers.



Teldeschi Vineyard. A 120 year old dry farmed, head-trained vineyard planted in the early 1900s, the Teldeschi Vineyard is located on the Dry Creek bench on the east side of Dry Creek Valley. It's currently owned by John Tedeschi whose grandfather

Lorenzo first owned the vineyard. The vineyard has red clay loam soils. Joe Swan made Zinfandel from this vineyard beginning in 1969, and it cemented his Zinfandel reputation. In 1984 Joel Peterson began sourcing fruit from it for his Ravenswood Zinfandel. Today Joel continues to make his Ravenswood Teldeschi, and his son Morgan Twain-Peterson makes a Bedrock Teldeschi.

Growers' principal complaints about the traditional Zinfandel clones have concerned the large berries, large tight clusters, and poor color. Unlike a grape like Pinot Noir, researchers couldn't go back to the origin of the grapes to find new clones because no one knew where it came from until 2001, and then only nine vines could be found. To find new and better Zinfandel clones, researchers had to systematically look at the world's largest plantings of the variety, in California.

Hence, in the mid-1990s, the UC Davis Zinfandel Heritage Vineyard Project was begun with support and guidance from ZAP with the objective of identifying new, high quality clones coming from old Zinfandel vineyards. Jim Wolpert of UC Davis collected about 90 different Zinfandel selections from old vines (60+ years) with smallish berries and loose clusters and planted them head-trained, 9x8, on St. George rootstock at the UC Davis Oakville station. This number was subsequently reduced to about 20 virus free selections, and in 2009, UC Davis Foundation Plant Services released 19 of them. Four of those clones show special promise and were grown at the Oakville station to make wine. Recently, a tasting was held at UC Davis of wines made from those four clones plus a Primitivo clone: FPS 26 (from the Zeni Vineyard in Mendocino Ridge), FPS 10 (from the Teldeschi Vineyard in Dry Creek Valley), FPS 25 (from the R.W. Moore vineyard in Coombsville), and FPS 24 (from Ridge's Lytton Springs Vineyard).

⁹ In addition, there are three proprietary FPS clones: FPS 29 (1998), FPS 13 (2006), and FPS 16 (2006).

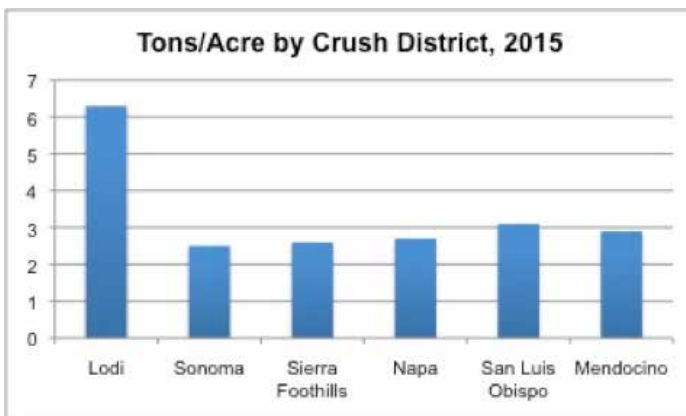


Primitivo. Like Zinfandel, the Italian variety Primitivo, grown mostly in Apulia, is derived from the Croatian variety Crljenak Kaštelanski, historically known as Tribidrag.

Although its DNA profile is identical to Zinfandel as well as Crljenak Kaštelanski, Primitivo grows somewhat less vigorously than its Zinfandel cousin, is thicker skinned, has lower bunch rot susceptibility, and matures earlier with higher sugar levels, so it's favored by winemakers who like higher ripeness. In both Croatia and Italy, the Crljenak Kaštelanski and Primitivo grapes have traditionally been used as blending grapes, made as single varieties only since the discovery of their relationship to Zinfandel. The EU recognizes Primitivo and Zinfandel as synonyms for the same variety. In the US, Primitivo is recognized as a clone of Zinfandel, but wines made from Primitivo are not permitted to be labeled Zinfandel. Today, the FPS offers not only 50 selections of Zinfandel but, also, 3 of Primitivo.

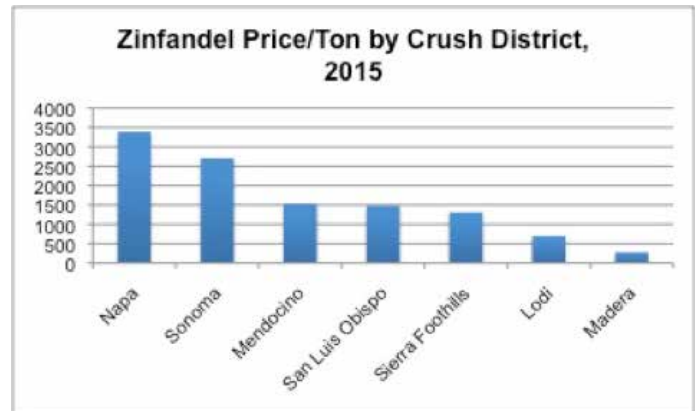
Yields

In 2015, 388 thousand tons of Zinfandel were crushed in California. Almost three-quarters of that total is accounted for by just two crushing districts, the one encompassing Fresno and Madera counties, and the one that corresponds to the Lodi AVA, and a large portion of that production goes to White Zinfandel and inexpensive red blends. As shown in the graph, yields per acre do not vary greatly across growing districts except for Lodi, which has a mix of low yielding, old vineyards and higher yielding vineyards. Yields per ton in the Fresno/Madera district are at least double those of Lodi and quadruple those of other areas¹⁰.



¹⁰ Yields are calculated based on acreage and production data reported by the California Department of Food and Agriculture in its 2015 Crush Report and 2015 Acreage Report. The Crush Report also gives the weighted average price for purchased grapes.

Although yields do not vary greatly across most growing areas, prices received per ton of grapes do. A grower in Napa receives an average price double that of Mendocino, almost five times that of Lodi and twelve times that of Fresno/Madera. Even so, Zinfandel in Napa remains under threat; a grower can get almost double the price for Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa. In other growing areas, like Lodi, Paso Robles/San Luis Obispo, and Sonoma, the average prices per ton of Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon are about equal.



Vintages

The poor vintage of 2011 has been followed by five very good to excellent vintages for California Zinfandel in terms of quality of fruit. These were also years of drought, which Zinfandel appears to have weathered well, both in terms of the size of the crush and quality. The big question is how the heavy rains that ended the drought will affect the 2017 vintage. Depending on the weather, growers may be kept busy dropping crop to maintain fruit quality.

2016 This was another early harvest, small with very high quality fruit. Moderate winter time rains combined with cooler than average daytime temperatures and an even growing and harvesting season contributed to exceptionally clean and flavor fruit. There was less heat stress than in 2015. Based on our tasting of barrel samples, we predict this vintage will be even better than 2015. 417 thousand tons of Zinfandel were crushed.

2015 Despite a lighter crop overall (but not for Zinfandel) compared to 2014, this was an outstanding vintage across the state. The fourth year of drought continued, but old vines and vines with deep roots weathered it successfully. It was one of the earliest seasons on record, with cool spring weather resulting in smaller grape clusters compared to 2014. The wines we tasted from this vintage are on average Excellent. 388 thousand tons of Zinfandel crushed.

2014 A mild winter and spring caused early bud break, although the overall length of the growing season was similar to past years, ending in an early harvest. Although the drought continued, temperatures were moderate with only minimal rain in September, allowing for even ripening and moderate crop levels across the

state. There was more regional variation than normal with Amador showing low yields. The wines are on average Very Good. 356 thousand tons of Zinfandel crushed.

2013 This vintage was even better than 2012, one of the truly great vintages in recent years. Vintners and growers throughout the state reported another high quality and generous vintage. The spring was warm and dry with uniform growing days and near ideal conditions for bringing grapes to maturity. Yields were slightly above average. The quality of the grapes was very high, and the wines Excellent. 469 thousand tons of Zinfandel crushed.

2012 This vintage was a hard act to follow. Moderate weather throughout the growing season put little pressure on the vines. Yields were generous and the quality of fruit very high. The wines are Very Good. 448 thousand tons of Zinfandel crushed.

2011 A wet winter and cool spring delayed bloom and resulted in shatter and lighter than average yields. Early autumn rains added to the overall difficulty of the vintage, resulting in lower sugar and alcohol levels, especially in Napa and Sonoma. Larry Turley says Pinot Noir fans loved the 2011 Zinfandel. Warmer areas like Lodi and Paso Robles suffered less. Just 345 thousand tons of Zinfandel crushed.

Winemaking

In this section, we examine how Zinfandel wine is crafted, from harvesting the grapes to aging in barrel and bottle. Perhaps surprising to the uninitiated, the making of Zinfandel shares much in common with making Pinot Noir. However, as with any other grape variety, winemakers differ in their approaches and often have strong opinions about winemaking. We discuss some of these approaches and their consequences below, starting with the harvest.

Harvesting and Sorting



Discarded Zinfandel Clusters,
Lodi's Kirschenmann Vineyard (@RC)

Perhaps the most important choice facing the winemaker concerns when to pick. The choice of when to harvest depends on the style of wine the winemaker desires. All winemakers base their decision on observation and tasting the grapes and, also, on sugar

levels as measured by degrees Brix. Harvested at high Brix, the wines are full and ripe but run the risk of jammy flavors and high alcohol. Harvested at lower Brix and

lower pH, they are often more elegant and structured with lower alcohol but run the risk of unripe fruit. In areas like the Russian River Valley where pH levels are often low, winemakers may pick as much on acidity as they do Brix.

The challenge for winemakers is to work in the vineyard and the winery to obtain wines that are fresh, flavorful and balanced without too high alcohol. For Zinfandel this challenge is complicated by its notoriously uneven ripening, as discussed in the viticulture section earlier. According to grower Frank Evangelho in Contra Costa County, "You really have to know what you're doing to ripen Zinfandel – it can have 18 to 26 Brix on the same vine, but you can balance it out more with what you do during the year. I don't like waiting for 30 sugar – 24 or 25 is good, but as soon as you get over 26, the grapes dehydrate and lose weight. At 30, their concentration and character changes. It's like an old man holding up a bunch of weight for four days."

At harvest the typical Zinfandel bunch contains some dessicated berries that are high in sugar. In a cold soak, they can raise the Brix level of the must by 2° or more, thereby also raising the potential alcohol level of the wine. Winemakers handle this problem by dropping fruit during the growing season, by sorting prior to the cold soak, and by doing micro-irrigation near harvest time, as Jay Heminway does at Red and Green. Bob Biale in Napa, tries to ensure similar levels of ripeness across the bunches and berries by doing three fruit drops, one before bunch closure, one at the end of veraison, and one near the end of lignification, about 3 weeks before harvest¹¹. At the winery they may use optical sorters or sorting tables that shake out the small, shriveled and green shot berries, or they may do as Turley does and rely on the destemmer to kick out the raisins. Biale uses a Pellenc non-optical sorter to drop out small berries, and Rombauer uses an optical sorter towards the same end. Others, like Mike McCay in Lodi and Mike Officer in the Russian River Valley, argue that heterogeneity of ripeness is an essential characteristic of Zinfandel that should be embraced and, so less sorting than some. The wines of the latter are likely to be complex and earthy, while those made with intensive sorting are more pure and clean. It's all a matter of taste.

In California's very old vineyards the harvesting decision has added complexity as they often contain several different varieties. Winemakers can either harvest Zinfandel and other varieties at separate times, ferment them separately and later blend them as Joel Peterson does with his Ravenswood Old Vine Zinfandel or all the grapes can be picked at the same time and fermented together, as Montevina/Terra d'Oro does with its SHR Field Blend of Zinfandel, Barbera, and Petite Sirah.

¹¹ The photo of Kirschenmann Vineyard is from a year of especially heavy fruit drop due to water berry (pale colored, weakly flavored grapes).

Soaking, Crushing, Fermenting



Pumpover of Zinfandel at Harney Lane Winery (©RC)

Once the grapes arrive at the winery, they are usually destemmed or partly destemmed, sorted, and cold soaked to extract color and polyphenols and soften tannins.

Several winemakers retain some whole clusters. The length of the cold soak ranges widely. Renwood does 1-3 days, Carlisle 4-5 days, Turley 5-7 days, and McCay does 10 days or more. Several vintners like Renwood and Turley do no crushing but instead let the fruit ferment in a semi-carbonic style. If Brix levels rise too high, water may be added to reduce alcohol levels.

Although most producers (e.g., Ravenswood, Harcourt Family, Turley Cellars) of old vine Zinfandel make Zinfandel like Pinot Noir in open top stainless steel fermenters with gentle punch downs or grills to submerge the caps, there are many exceptions¹². Joel Peterson is using open top redwood fermenters for his new Once & Future wines. Renwood uses mostly closed top fermenters and does two pumpovers per day. Turley finishes fermentation in barrel, while others finish in tank and rack to barrel. The fermentation is usually cool (under 80°) and long (10-12 days) and done separately for each vineyard block or parcel.

Fermentation is done with either ambient or commercial yeast. Winemakers like Tegan Passalacqua, Morgan Twain-Peterson, Mike McCay and many others swear that ambient yeast is superior. But others like Mike Officer, Russell Bevan, and Joe Schebl use commercial yeasts, arguing that they need yeasts that can handle high alcohol and high acidity (e.g., in the Russian River Valley), and can ferment at cool temperatures and do so quickly and thoroughly so tanks can be turned over quickly. Larger wineries, like Montevina and Michael David, almost always need the reliability and consistency that commercial yeasts offer. Once fermented dry, the must is lightly pressed and allowed to settle before racking to barrel for malo.

Elevage

Many vintners mature their Zinfandel in a combination of American and French oak barrels. They're using an increasing percentage of French oak, especially for old vineyard wines, due to its tighter grain. Renwood,

Carlisle, Ravenswood, Once and Only and Turley mainly use only French oak vessels. However, others prefer American for its hint of honeyed sweetness, and a few use Bourbon barrels for their charred vanilla caramel character. Most winemakers age Zinfandel for about 12 months in 20-30 percent new oak. Again, practices vary. Bill Easton uses 25 percent new French oak for his Easton Old Vine Rinalidi Vineyard Zinfandel, and Zachary Long at Kunde uses 30 percent new French oak for the Century Vines Zinfandel, while Russel Bevan uses about 50 percent new at Chase and Bryan Kvamme at Martinelli uses 75 percent new French oak. Renwood ages the wine for significantly longer than most, 18-20 months. Most winemakers are pulling back on toast levels.

Blending and Aging

Wines to be blended typically lie on their lees in barrel for several months prior to racking and blending. Aside from the field blends of old vines, vintners frequently blend other varieties with Zinfandel contributing perfume, spice, acidity, color and structure. Petite Sirah is regularly added to Zinfandel to give it structure, color and greater longevity; it's an especially common blending grape in Lodi. Carignane contributes acidity when Zinfandel is too ripe. Alicante Bouschet provides a high concentrations of anthocyanins for color. In the Sierra Foothills where Barbera grows so well, it is often blended with Zinfandel to add acidity and freshness. The mixed black grape blends of the 19th century were a combination of varieties that was balanced and capable of aging — important considerations at a time when wines had to be much more structured and sturdy to survive in an era before the refrigeration and bottling techniques we have today.

Zinfandel can age well, especially when it has high tannins and high acidity. For this report we tasted a selection of Zinfandel wines that were 10, 20 and 30 years old, and most showed very well. The 10 year olds were still fruit forward in character and showed purity and freshness. The 20 and 30 year old wines also retained much of their original fruitiness but revealed more secondary notes of leather, wood and earth. In a few cases, oak dominated the wine, but in most instances, the wines showed good balance considering their age.

¹² At Harley Lane Winery in Lodi, winemaker Chad gave us three different wine samples from the old Lizzie James Vineyard. One was fermented in a closed top tank, a second was fermented in an open tank with commercial yeast, and the third was fermented in open tank with ambient yeast. The differences were subtle, although the second sample was more softly textured.

Zinfandel's Growing Regions

Napa Valley



Jay Heminway's Green & Red Vineyard

Napa Valley is California's most famous wine-producing region. While it is best known for its Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley is also one of the finest wine-producing regions for Zinfandel.

Indeed,

Zinfandel was the most popular variety grown in Napa Valley up until the late 1960s when it was overtaken by Cabernet Sauvignon and other varieties. Nonetheless, Napa Valley remains an important region of small-scale high quality Zinfandel producers. While Cabernet Sauvignon has come to dominate the valley, it's also true that the number of acres of Zinfandel has increased by more than half since 1970.

As a growing region, Napa Valley consists of 33 thousand acres of vineyards. Zinfandel occupies 1351 acres, 4 percent of the Napa total, and just 3 percent of California's total Zinfandel acreage in 2015.

Napa Valley has many unique microclimates due to various weather and geographical influences. There are Zinfandel vineyards on well drained, rich red clay loam hillsides as well as gravelly bench lands on the valley floor. Zinfandel vineyards are found from Calistoga and Howell Mountain in the north and northwest to Atlas Peak and Los Carneros in the Valley's southern end. The open southern end of the valley floor is cooler during the growing season due to the proximity of Napa Valley to the San Pablo Bay.

Howell Mountain, located due east of St. Helena, offers rolling hills and unique microclimates above 1400' for growing Zinfandel. When Napa's valley floor is covered with marine fog, Howell Mountain remains sunny. It has porous, decomposed volcanic ash "tufa" and red clay soils that tend to be dry. These conditions produce intense wines from small clusters and smaller grapes. Black Sears is one of the most acclaimed vineyards on Howell Mountain.

Old Vines

Like other important Zinfandel growing regions in California, the Napa Valley has several vineyards populated with old vines, although the expansion of Cabernet Sauvignon resulted in the uprooting of some of the old vineyards planted in the 19th century. Low yielding, old vine Zinfandel still remains under threat in the valley; on average, an acre of Zinfandel

generates only 2/3 the revenue of an acre of Cabernet Sauvignon¹³. Nonetheless, there is an impressive, albeit small, concentration of old Zinfandel vineyards remaining in the valley from which local winemakers are producing exciting wines. Most, but not all, of the vines are dry farmed and head-trained.

Among the old vineyards of Napa are Aldo's Vineyard in Oak Knoll, belonging to Bob Biale; Beatty Vineyard; the Hayne Vineyard, on the west side of St. Helena; Korte Ranch and Quaglia Vineyards also in St. Helena; the Dickerson Vineyard on Zinfandel Lane in the valley; and the R W Moore Vineyard in Calistoga. A new addition to Napa's old vineyard inventory is the tiny Oakville Farmhouse Vineyard, located adjacent to Napa's famous To Kalon Vineyard and recently discovered by the old vineyard sleuth, Morgan Twain-Peterson. [See Annex 2 for a more complete listing of old Zinfandel vineyards.]

Napa Valley has many outstanding Zinfandel producers. Some of the more exemplary ones reviewed in this report include: Artezin, Brown Estate, D-cubed Cellars, Elyse, Green and Red, Hendry Vineyard, Ravenswood, Rombauer, Saddleback Cellars, Tres Sabores, Turley Cellars, and Robert Biale Vineyards (see box).



The Biale Winemaking Team

Robert Biale Vineyards is one of Napa Valley's outstanding Zinfandel producers. The winery traces its origins to Pietro Biale, an immigrant from Genoa who arrived in Mount Veeder in the 1920s and planted his first 4

acres of Zinfandel on the valley floor. Over the years, the Biale family routinely sold their grapes for bulk wine. However, with the creation of a partnership between Al Perry, Dave Pramuk, and Aldo and Bob Biale (shown here), Biale Vineyards produced its first commercial vintage in 1991. Since then the winery has created a series of a dozen high quality vineyard-designated Zinfandels from their own 23 acres of estate vineyards and other historic family vineyards in Napa and Sonoma County.

Sonoma County

Sonoma County is more than double the size of Napa County and is highly diverse geographically with numerous microclimates suitable for wine grape production. The diversity within Sonoma has led to the creation of 16 different AVAs, many of which grow Zinfandel. For many years Zinfandel was the most widely planted red grape in Sonoma. In 1970 it

¹³ On average, an acre of Zinfandel yields 3 tons of fruit for which a grower received \$3335/ton in 2015; In contrast, an acre of Cabernet Sauvignon yields 2.7 tons of fruit but received an average price of \$5923/ton.

represented 40% of all red vine plantings; today its just 11 percent. Some growers are planting new Zinfandel vineyards like the old ones, head-trained and dry-farmed. For this report, we focus on five of the main Zinfandel-producing AVAs in Sonoma County, from the inland warm climate to the cooler coastal-climate growing regions.

Alexander Valley

Nestled between the Mayacamas on the east and the Coastal Range on the west, the 22 mile long Alexander Valley is a highly diversified AVA ranging from 900-2400 ft in elevation with varied terroirs. The northern end of the valley is about 10 degrees warmer than the southern end, which is cooled by the evening fog that creeps up the valley from the Russian River. While best known for its Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, the valley is also an excellent source for Zinfandel and other varieties. The best Zinfandel is grown on the bench lands and foothills. Excessive vigor is a problem for most grapes grown on the valley floor.

Alexander Valley has many old vineyards dating back to the mid and late 19th century. One of the most noteworthy is Seghesio's head-pruned Home Ranch vineyard, which was planted in 1895. Others include Big River Ranch (planted 1893), Nervo Ranch (1896), and Trusendi Vineyard. The most famous old vineyard is undoubtedly Ridge's Geyserville, a mixed black vineyard which has a patch of vines over 130 years old.

Noteworthy producers of Zinfandel sourced from the Alexander Valley include Murphey-Goode, Dashe, Bedrock, Miro, Ravenswood, Ridge, Seghesio and Trentadue.

Dry Creek Valley



Sbragia Vineyard in Dry Creek

Located in Northern Sonoma County, Dry Creek Valley contains about half of the county's Zinfandel acreage. It is also home to several old vine Zinfandel vineyards, mainly planted by Italian immigrants in the 1900s. By the 1880s, Zinfandel was the dominant grape planted with about 900 acres. Today, nearly nine thousand acres are farmed in the Valley, and Zinfandel represents a significant part of total plantings.

Dry Creek Valley's warm days and cool nights make it an ideal growing area for Zinfandel. While only 20 miles from the Pacific, the 16 mile long by 2 mile wide valley is sheltered from coastal breezes and has less fog intrusion than the Russian River Valley to the south. As a result, the further northwest you go, the warmer

the daytime temperatures. In the warm areas of the valley, winemakers have to take care to avoid producing jammy, Port-like Zinfandels. Several producers are highly successful at doing this and are crafting well-balanced, elegant wines.

Many Zinfandel aficionados consider Dry Creek Valley wines to be the finest expression of Zinfandel in California. The best ones come from the benches and hills and only rarely from the valley floor. The slopes on the east side of Dry Creek Road yield wines of considerable focus and spice. In general, Dry Creek Zinfandels tend to be full-bodied and masculine with briary black berry fruit, spice box and pepper. Those from vineyards in cooler regions show are quite accessible with supple textures and more black cherry and plum.

Some of Zinfandel's most famous vineyards are located in Dry Creek. They include Ridge's Lytton Spring vineyard, planted in 1901, and Teldeschi Ranch, which has a block of 120-year-old vines on the east side of the valley which was the source of Joe Swan's pioneering Zinfandels of the 1970s.

Many of Dry Creek's noteworthy Zinfandel producers are families that have continuously owned and operated their vineyards and wineries. They include: A. Rafanelli (since 1900), Nalle/Henderlong (1927), Pedroncelli (1927), and Seghesio (1895). Other outstanding producers include Bedrock, Mauritson, Mazzocco, Quivira, Ravenswood, Ridge, and S. Bragia.

Rockpile



Mauritson's Vineyard Above Lake Sonoma

This growing area consists of Coastal Range hills that rise above Dry Creek Valley and Lake Sonoma. Originally considered part of Dry Creek Valley, Rockpile is one of the most dramatic AVAs in Sonoma County. It is characterized by steep rocky terrain, strong coastal 10-15 mph wind gusts, and highly diverse soils, with exposure and terrain that are partly the result of its location right on the Healdsburg-Rogers Creek earthquake fault. Lying above the fog line it receives extra hours of sunlight as well as temperatures 10-15° cooler than the valley below. Temperature swings are

also moderate compared to lower altitude vineyards. Annual rainfall ranges from 50-73 inches.

The wild topography and thin soils, high altitudes and diverse exposures (predominantly southwest and northeast) of the vineyards provide excellent growing conditions for several varieties, especially Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, and Syrah, the dominant varieties in the Rockpile AVA. Zinfandel, especially, benefits from the moderate temperatures and extended hang time, which contribute to uniform ripening and avoid the raisining that can occur in high heat. The vines are stressed by the poor soils and gusting winds, leading to low yields and intense fruit. Rockpile Zinfandels are renown for their elegant, intense red-fruited character and high acidity.

While there are no wineries in Rockpile, several outstanding Zinfandel producers source fruit from the AVA, including Mauritsen, Mazzocco, Carol Shelton, Jeff Cohen and Wonderment.

Russian River Valley

The Russian River Valley AVA is best known for producing some of California's finest Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. However, it is also an outstanding growing area for Zinfandel and has a wealth of old vine vineyards of Zinfandel and mixed blacks (see Annex 2).

Located in northern Sonoma County, Russian River Valley comprises 126 thousand acres of rolling hills, dense redwood forests and apple orchards with 15 thousand acres planted to vineyards. Fog from the Pacific is the defining feature of the valley's climate. The fog enters the valley during the growing season and brings with it cool night and morning air to an otherwise warm growing area. The result is slowed ripening and extended hang time for Zinfandel and other grapes. This extended growing season intensifies the fruit flavors in the wines.

Russian River Valley also has diverse microclimates where Zinfandel and other varieties thrive. Old vineyards that were originally planted by Italian immigrants as field blends are today the focus of attention from a cadre of skilled Zinfandel winemakers. One of the leaders of this cadre is Mike Officer of Carlisle Winery (see box).



Carlisle Winery While not well known outside the world of old vine Zinfandel fanatics, Carlisle Winery has become one of California's most accomplished producers of old vine Zinfandel and red Rhone varieties. Mike and Kendall Officer had no vineyards of

their own until they purchased the Carlisle Vineyard that was planted in 1927 by Alcide Pelletti, and they made wine in a custom crush facility for 14 years before the recent completion of a new winery. The wines are so highly regarded by the cognoscenti that almost all of it is sold through Mike's mailing list. Mike is cofounder of the Historic Vineyard Society with Morgan Twain-Peterson of Bedrock Winery. The Society documents the many special old vines of Sonoma and elsewhere. Shown here: winemaker Jay Maddox with Mike Officer at our tasting at the winery.

The outstanding old Zinfandel vineyards in the Russian River Valley are too numerous to mention. Some of the most famous, in addition to the Carlisle Vineyard already noted, are the incredibly steep and old Jackass Hill of Martinelli, Limerick Lane, Maffei, and Papera Ranch. The noteworthy producers making Zinfandel from the Russian River Valley is also large in number and include Acorn, Artezin, Bedrock, Carol Shelton, Chase, Gary Farrell, Gehricke, Hartford Family, Jeff Cohen, Joseph Swan, Limerick Lane, William Selyem, Martinelli, Miro, Ravenswood, Ridge, Robert Biale, Rock Wall, St. Francis, T-Vine, Tin-Barn, and V. Sattui.

Sonoma Valley



Bedrock Vineyard is located in the Sonoma Valley banana belt where the temperatures are warm, and there's less fog and wind intrusion than further south. It's famous

today for its 35 acres of 125 year old vines, mostly Zinfandel, but, also, mixed blacks and 30 obscure varieties. It's also famous for the historic personalities tied to it. Originally part of the Mexican land grant to General Vallejo, Comandante of Alta California, it was purchased by General Hooker in 1856 with the financial backing of William Tecumseh Sherman, who later led the infamous March to the Sea during the Civil War. Hooker planted the first vitis vinifera vines at Bedrock. After phylloxera destroyed the vineyard, George Hearst, father of publisher William Randolph Hearst, purchased the vineyard and began replanting in 1884. Eventually, the vineyard ended up in the hands of the Domenici family, who farmed it for 100 years before selling it to Joel Peterson in 2005. Magnificent wines come from this vineyard, made by outstanding wineries like Bedrock, Ravenswood, Carlisle, Dashe and Windagap.

The Sonoma Valley AVA is home to some of the oldest vineyards and earliest wineries in the state. As the epicenter of California winemaking in the 19th century, it was the first area hit by phylloxera, and was thus also the first area to be replanted. It is located in the southeastern part of the county between the Mayacamas and Sonoma Mountain and stretches from San Pablo Bay in the south to Santa Rosa in the north. The 24 mile length of the valley means that it contains cooler areas to the south (with breezes from both the San Pablo Bay and the Petaluma Gap) and warmer areas in the middle, the so-called "banana belt" where Joel Peterson and Morgan Twain-Peterson's Bedrock Vineyard is located (see box). Zinfandel grows well both on the warmer valley floor and on the slopes of the Mayacamas such as Monte Rosso (see box). Sonoma Valley Zinfandels are large scale but not as bold as those of Alexander Valley or Dry Creek.



Monte Rosso Vineyard. The Monte Rosso Vineyard is one of California's vineyard treasures. It's located in the Mayacamas Mountains at 2000' elevation on the east side of Sonoma Valley. Named for its red, iron-rich soils, the 350 acre vineyard has about 40 acres of mixed blacks. Planted in the 1880s by Emmanuel Goldstein, the vineyard was acquired by Louis Martini in the 1930s. E&J Gallo became the owner when they acquired Martini in 2002. The Monte Rosso Zinfandels usually show black cherry with red raspberry and briary notes, and they have a signature Cointreau-like scent. They're soft on release but can improve in the bottle for years. Tannins are slow to polymerize, so grapes are picked at a high Brix while still retaining high acidity and balance. Numerous wineries have made Monte Rosso Zinfandel, including Bedrock, Biale, Carlisle, and many others. Beginning in 2017, Gallo will no longer sell fruit from the vineyard.

Sierra Foothills and Amador County



Established in 1987, the Sierra Foothills AVA incorporates parts of Amador, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa and Yuba

counties. It has 7470 acres of vines, mostly in Amador (50% of the total) and El Dorado (29%), and about 100 wineries. Over 60 percent of all wine grape plantings are Zinfandel, which is especially well suited to the Foothills with its warm climate and late frosts. Amador County is by far the most important producer of Zinfandel in the Sierra Foothills, with 2105 acres of vines, accounting for 79 percent of the AVA's total Zinfandel plantings. Most of Amador County's vineyards and wineries are located in the Shenandoah Valley and Fiddletown AVAs.

The Zinfandel vines of Amador County are planted at 1200-3500 feet elevation on rolling hillsides with shallow, well-drained, low nutrient, decomposed granitic soils. The vineyards of the Fiddletown AVA have steeper slopes and higher elevations than those of the Shenandoah Valley. Most vineyards are dry-farmed, and many have self-rooted vines. The lack of water surface delivery and unpredictable ground water make irrigation and frost protection difficult. Yields are low, and luminosity is high due to the altitude. It's a warm growing area with high diurnal variations that help grapes retain acidity.

Changes are happening fast in the Foothills' wineries and, also, in wine tourism. Tourists find an environment 180° different from the Napa Valley. Most wineries and their tasting rooms are small and casual with easy access to the vineyards and the winemakers. The scenery is bucolic and hilly with pastures of sheep and forests intermingled with the vineyards. With the growing metropolis of Sacramento just an hour's drive away, Zinfandel and other wines promise to be an increasingly important driver of the local economy.

Vineyards

The majority of Amador's vines are head-trained, spur-pruned and either own-rooted or on low vigor rootstocks. While phylloxera is prevalent, the old Zinfandel vines take a long time to succumb. Many of Amador's vineyards are organically farmed and dry farmed, and sheep have been used for weed control for many decades. Deer fencing is essential in many places.

Roughly 600 acres of Amador's vines are 65 years or older, and several vineyards date back to the 19th

century, including the original Grandpere [see box]. Other outstanding old Amador vineyards include Deaver, Esola, Lubenko, Rinaldi, Sadie Upton, and the Story Vineyard. Old vineyards are also found in El Dorado County, including the Walker Vineyard, Herbert Vineyard (in the Fair Play AVA), and the Boeger Vineyard (planted to Zinfandel in the 1880s). (See Annex 2 for a more complete listing and descriptions.)



The Original Grandpere Vineyard [OGP]¹⁴

The oldest documented Zinfandel vineyard in California, the OGP was planted in Amador County's Shenandoah Valley about 5 miles northeast of Plymouth by John

Dale and Mahala Teter Upton, who like many others came to mine and stayed to farm. They came from Missouri in 1863, planted their vines, and then John Dale died, leaving Mahala to farm with ten children in tow. An 1869 land deed showing vines planted on this site confirms the vineyard is at least 148 years old. Reportedly, over 80 percent of the vines on this 10-acre vineyard are from the original planting. The vineyard is self-rooted, head-trained, and spaced 9x9. It's at 1300' elevation with granitic sandy loam soils. Scott and Terri Harvey purchased the vineyard in 1984, pruned to limit yields, and first sold OGP vineyard designated wine. OGP is not to be confused with Renwood Winery's Grandpere Vineyard, which is a newer vineyard planted with cuttings from the OGP. The OGP wines are lean and elegant, similar perhaps to the Claret style popular in the 19th century.

Wineries and Wines

While there are larger commercial wineries like Terra d'Oro and Renwood in the Sierra Foothills, the vast majority of wineries are family owned operations. In the past, winemaking often had an amateur quality, but today most family operations are crafting premium quality wines. Among the notable producers are Andis, Borjón, Cedarville, Easton, Ironstone, Lava Cap, Millaire, Renwood, Terra d'Oro, and Turley.

Some exciting Zinfandel developments have come about recently. In 2011, the Argentine industrialist Alejandro Bulgheroni arrived in Amador County with world renown winemakers Alberto Antonini and Carlos Pulenta in tow. He purchased Renwood winery and has since invested heavily to put it at the forefront of quality Zinfandel producers. Then in 2012, Larry Turley, California's foremost old vine Zinfandel producer, purchased the

Karly Wines winery and vineyard from former fighter pilot Buck Cobb and his wife Karly.

The style of Zinfandel made in the Foothills has changed over time, as it has in other regions. Originally light in color and weight, it was often labeled and sold as Claret. In the 1970s and 80s, winemakers went for a much riper style, and Amador Zinfandel became known for its bold, concentrated flavors with brambly, clove and anise spice notes and high alcohol. The recent arrival of new winemakers and consultants is leading to stylistic changes, too. Today's style is eclectic, ranging from elegant, red-fruited wines, often from Fiddletown, like those of Borjón, Cedarville, and Easton to heavily oaked, dense, dark wines like those of Renwood. Most wines fall somewhere in between these two styles with more red than black fruit and medium color and weight but well structured with vivid acidity.

Lodi



Lodi's Soucie Vineyard

The Lodi AVA is located in the northern portion of California's Central Valley near the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. Two major rivers, the historic Mokelumne around the city of Lodi and the Cosumnes originating in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, account for the region's deep loam soils. Zinfandels grown here benefit from afternoon and evening breezes from the San Francisco delta.

Lodi is a vast growing region of 552 thousand acres, 110 thousand of which are planted to wine grapes with 19 thousand acres of Zinfandel, over 40 percent of California's total Zinfandel acreage. The Lodi AVA has seven sub-AVAs, covering parts of two counties—southern Sacramento and northern San Joaquin—and is home to almost 800 growers. It has several large wineries like Woodbridge, Turner Road Vintners, Michael David, Delicato and Trinchero (Sutter Home) and numerous boutique wineries. Lodi is especially well known for its large number of old vine parcels.

The region has warm summer days, but it's flat terrain give breezes from the San Francisco Bay an unimpeded pathway to Lodi's vineyards, resulting in cooler evenings and large diurnal swings during the growing season. It

has an average high (90°) and low (54.4°) in the month of August.

Lodi's soils are rich and loamy on the west side close to the Delta, becoming deeper and sandier with lower water tables to the east. The eastern side of Lodi is slightly warmer and can produce deep-rooted vines with smaller berries, higher acidity, and firmer tannins. The dividing line is often given as Highway 99, west of which the soils are richer and darker and east of which they're sandier and less fertile. Lying west of Hwy 99 are the Jahant AVA and parts of the River AVAs. Everything else lies to the east, including most of the Mokelumne AVA, which is Lodi's largest sub-AVA with 42 thousand acres of vineyards.

The promising Clement Hills AVA is the second largest sub-AVA with 22 thousand acres under vine. In contrast to the flat terrain of Mokelumne River, Clement Hills has rolling hills at the base of the Sierra Foothills with varying aspects and higher elevations ranging from 90-400 feet; the soils are mostly granite and volcanic below alluvial topsoils. Clement Hills is home to several old Zinfandel vineyards, including Dogtown and Stampede located in sandy loam areas close to the Mokelumne River. (see Annex 2) Lodi's remaining 46 thousand acres of vines are spread across the other five sub-AVAs.



The Lodi Winegrape Commission, established in 1991, has been instrumental in enhancing Lodi's reputation as a major producer of premium quality wines. As a

result of its activities and Lodi's growing reputation, dozens of growers have become winemakers, and the number of Lodi wineries has increased from eight in the early 1990s to over 85 today. The Commission had the goal of putting the name Lodi on California's wine map from its inception. Stuart Spencer of St. Amant Winery reports that his winery began working with the Commission as early as 1992 to produce single-vineyard, small production wines to market in the region.

Vines and Wines

Lodi has one of the largest concentrations of old vines in California. Some are century-old head-trained, own-rooted Zinfandel vines that managed to escape destruction from phylloxera due to their sandy soils. The old vineyards are mainly located on the banks of the Mokelumne River around the city of Lodi, although some can also be found in the Clement Hills. Notable, old vineyards include Royal Tee Vineyard on Jesse Grove's Estate (planted in 1889), Mohr-Fry Ranch Marian's block (planted in 1901), and Soucie Vineyard (planted in 1916). Other century old vineyards include Lizzy James, Kirschenmann, Rous and Soucie, and Stampede. See Annex 2 for descriptions of these and other old Zinfandel vineyards.



Lodi Native™

Lodi Native. In 2012 several of Lodi's new generation-12 vintners-decided to emulate

Mendocino County's Coro Mendocino, where several producers made high end Zinfandel blends using agreed upon rules and packaging them alike since 2001. They agreed to a set of rules for making Lodi Native Zinfandel, including the use of old vines from single vineyards, native yeast, used oak barrels, and non-interventionist winemaking, including no watering to reduce alcohol levels, no acidification, no fining or filtration. The best six Zinfandels made using the Lodi Native criteria are sold as a special six-pack.

In recent decades Michael David (see box) and several other Lodi growers have transformed themselves into grower-producers. Kevin Phillips reports that in 1998 Michael David was selling 95 percent of the crop from its 800 acres of vines; today it makes wine from all of its estate vineyards. Growers like Kyle Lerner of Harney Lane Winery continue to sell most their fruit but make small quantities of Zinfandel from their best parcels; Lerner farms 600 acres but makes only 5 thousand cases of wine to sell under the Harney Lane label, including single vineyard Zinfandels made from his 110+ year old Lizzy James Vineyard. Many other smaller, quality-oriented vintners have begun commanding more attention for their Zinfandels, especially those sourced from old vines.



Michael David Winery.

The Phillips family has been growing grapes in Lodi for several generations. In 1975 they opened a popular fruit stand along Hwy 12 and about a decade later began making wine and selling it at the fruit stand, name their winery Michael

David after the brother-owners, Michael Phillips and David Phillips. The brothers have a knack, not only for making good wine sold at fair prices but, also, for giving their wines appealing names, like the "7 Deadly Zins" which they introduced in 2000 and now reaches about 450 thousand cases/year in sales. They are one of the largest wineries in Lodi with 750 acres of estate vineyards and selling almost 1 million cases/year, about half of it Zinfandel. Operations Vice President Kevin Phillips (shown here with Co-Owner/President David Phillips) purchases fruit from 45 Zinfandel growers located in the Mokelumne River, Clements Hills and Borden Ranch AVAs and offers financial incentives for both fruit quality and for growers using farming practices specified by the Lodi Rules program. Each year the winery holds a Grower's Barrel Tasting; the top 20 percent of barrels (all tasted blind) receive an additional \$125/ton for the grapes they sold to the winery. Beginning in 2011, all the Lodi fruit crushed at the winery was certified sustainable.

Paso Robles & San Luis Obispo County



Ueberroth Vineyard, Planted in 1885

San Luis Obispo County has 2,287 acres of Zinfandel, more than Amador County and almost double the acreage of Napa. It represents 10 percent of the total plantings of the County. Over 90 percent of the county's Zinfandel is grown in the Paso Robles AVA¹⁵. While California's total plantings of Zinfandel have remained relatively unchanged since 1995, those of San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles have increased by almost 150 percent. Indeed, today many wineries in Paso Robles include a Zinfandel or two in their portfolios.

Paso Robles provides ideal growing conditions for Zinfandel—a warm but not excessively hot climate and a long growing season. Jan Paderewski, the famous composer, first introduced Zinfandel in Paso Robles in the 1920s at his Rancho San Ignacio. The most interesting wines are from dry-farmed, head pruned old Zinfandel vineyards.

Vines and Wines

Paso Robles is home to some of California's oldest and most distinguished Zinfandel vineyards, including the Dusi (planted in 1923), Pesenti (1922) and Ueberroth (1885) vineyards. Most of these vineyards, planted by Italian immigrants, are head-pruned and dry-farmed and located west of the Salinas River. They produce very low yields of very small berries. See Annex 2 for more on Paso Robles' old Zinfandel vineyards.

Several different styles of Zinfandel are produced in Paso Robles. Some like Peachy Canyon's Snow Zinfandel are relatively light in character with red berry fruit, spice and herbs. Others, such as Thacher's Triumvirate Reserve Zinfandel, Dusi's Estate Zinfandel, and Peachy Canyon's Zinfandel Mustard Creek, are bigger riper, fruit forward wines, lush in character with intense aromas of blackberry, pepper and earth with notes of forest floor. Turley's old vine, head-trained Zinfandel Ueberroth Vineyard exhibits ripe blue and black fruit with earthy complexity.

¹⁵ San Luis Obispo County Crop Report for 2012; the County ceased reporting plantings by variety after 2012. The earliest variety specific data are reported in 1995.

Mendocino County



Mendocino County is located directly north of Sonoma County. It has 1900 acres of Zinfandel, 4 percent of the state's total, and a bit less than Amador and San Luis Obispo counties. Zinfandel is grown throughout the county, even in the upper hillsides of the cool Anderson Valley that lie near the Pacific. However, of the county's twelve viticultural areas, the Redwood Valley AVA, McDowell Valley AVA, Ukiah Valley AVA and Mendocino Ridge AVA have the largest Zinfandel plantings [see map].

Redwood Valley AVA lies in northern Mendocino along the Russian River and includes the Ricetti Bench where the first vineyards were planted in the late 19th century. The Redwood Valley growing area has 2600 acres of vineyards at 750-1500' altitude. Although located inland, it is cooled by a gap in the coastal range that lets in ocean breezes. As a result, the growing season is long, and its Zinfandel grown on red clay soils is distinctive. Roughly seven small family wineries are in operation. The McDowell Valley AVA is high sloping bench land that sits up to 1000' above sea level and overlooks the Russian River. Only 540 acres, the region specializes in Rhone varieties and Zinfandel.

Mendocino Ridge, essentially an extension of the true Sonoma Coast about seven miles from the Pacific, is a newer AVA but has some of Mendocino's oldest producing vineyards. It runs 36 miles north from the Sonoma County line north to Navarro and includes the coastal ridges near the Pacific. With just 237 acres of vineyards, the AVA includes only land above 1200' in altitude. The first plantings, primarily Zinfandel, were established in the mid-1800s around the Civil War. John Parducci, one of Mendocino County's Italian immigrant pioneers, established his winery in 1910; it later became known as McNab Ridge. Edmeades, one of Mendocino's most noteworthy producers, grows Zinfandel in the coastal mountains of Mendocino Ridge [see box].



Edmeades Shamrock Vineyard

Edmeades' Folly

Edmeades Vineyard and Winery was established in 1963 when Dr. Donald Edmeades, A Pasadena cardiologist, bought the

Nunn Ranch consisting of 108 acres of grazing and orchard land north of Philo and planted 24 acres of grapes. His neighbors scoffed at him for trying to grow Zinfandel, and in good humor he put up a sign on Highway 128 that read "Edmeades Folly". In the end, he proved them wrong. He launched the Edmeades label and built a winery in 1972 and, unfortunately, died shortly thereafter. His son Deron took over and produced the first vintage, and Edmeades quickly gained fame for producing lusty hillside mountain Zins. In 1988 Edmeades was purchased by Kendall Jackson, and winemaker Ben Salasar of La Crema and other properties became chief winemaker in 2012. Edmeades sources fruit from throughout Mendocino County, including the Piffero Vineyard, planted in the 1930s, and the 2900' high Shamrock Vineyard in northern Mendocino. Winemaking at Edmeades is traditional, natural and low tech. They ferment in small open-top bins, do hand punchdowns, and practice minimal manipulation and no fining or filtration at bottling. The simplicity of these methods allows the terroir of each site to be expressed in the wines.

Contra Costa



Evangelho Vineyard on Sandy Soils near PGE's Power Plant

to supply housing to Bay Area commuters, and Zinfandel acreage decreased until the early 1990s when Rosenblum, Cline, 3 Wine, and others rediscovered Contra Costa's old vine treasures.

Old Vines

Most of Contra Costa's Zinfandel vineyards today are old, head-trained vines planted on deep sandy soils near the Sacramento River. Since sandy soils are inhospitable to phylloxera, many of the vines are self-rooted and predate California's phylloxera epidemic. The area experiences huge temperature swings as cool winds from the Pacific and San Francisco Bay roar through the Carquinez Straits. The cool winds contribute to a long growing season that allows the grapes to develop rich, complex flavors while retaining acidity.

Contra Costa's old vines remain under threat. A decade ago the city of Antioch ripped out four acres of the esteemed Evangelho Vineyard to put in a new sewer line that was never built; owner Frank Evangelho received \$1.50/vine in compensation. Other vineyards are owned by DuPont Chemical or the Contra Costa Water District and could at any moment be converted to more lucrative functions, like a shopping center.

Cline Cellars played an important role in the revival of Contra Costa's old vineyards. Fred Cline grew up spending time at his grandparents' home in Contra Costa, and in 1982 he founded his winery in Oakley in Contra Costa. Cline Cellars continues to produce single vineyard Contra Costa Zinfandel today from 100+ year old, dry farmed head-trained,, self-rooted vineyards like Live Oak, Bridgehead, and Big Break. In 2008, Matt Cline, of the Cline family and wife Erin, successfully established the Three Wine Company to produced Zinfandels from the old vineyards of Contra Costa. Other important old Zinfandel vineyards in Contra Costa include Evangelho, Mori, Pato, and Planchon, which provide fruit to other elite producers of Zinfandel, including Bedrock, Turley, and Rosenblum.

Contra Costa County is one of the smaller producers of Zinfandel with just 461 acres in 2015, 40 percent of all its vineyard acreage, and most of it very old vines. Historically, Contra Costa was a much more important wine producer, with a 1905 survey showing it almost as large as Napa. Vineyards were replaced by developments



Evangelho Vineyard A 36 acre vineyard planted in the 1890s about 1/4 mile from the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, this is a self-rooted vineyard, planted 10x10, until recently owned and managed by Frank Evangelho (shown here), a

descendant of the Portuguese farmers who settled in this area. Evangelho owns part of the vineyard; the rest is leased from PGE. About 35% of the vineyard is Zinfandel, 35% Carignan, and the rest Mataro. Located next to a PG&E plant (which, ironically, keeps the area from being developed as housing), it's a field blend of Zinfandel, Carignan, Mourvedre and other varieties planted on 40' deep banks of beach sand along the Sacramento River Delta where afternoon winds whip through. Brother Timothy of Christian Brothers Winery began buying fruit from Evangelho in 1972, and Ridge soon followed suit. Today, Bedrock, Neyers, Precedent, Artezin and Three Wine Co. all make Zinfandel based wines from Evangelho. It's also one of the components of Turley's Duarte Zinfandel. Morgan Twain-Peterson purchased the vineyard in April 2017.

Pairing Zinfandel with Food



Zinfandel is a versatile and expressive varietal. It offers several styles that allow the wine to pair beautifully with a wide variety of dishes. The bold dark fruited flavors of some Zinfandels make them ideal for pairing with beef dishes, provided the wines are not overly ripe and alcoholic. Moderately red-fruited and well-balanced

Zinfandels are wonderful with lamb, pork and poultry and shine with pasta dishes as well spicy Asian and Mexican dishes. Zinfandel also pairs beautifully with different cheeses as part of a meal or on their own.

In what follows we provide recommendations on pairing Zinfandel with food based on our own experience and the recommendations of others whose judgements we value.¹⁶ However, since Zinfandel comes in different styles that offer different pairing possibilities, we first define these

¹⁶ See Andrew Dorenburg and Karen Page What to Drink with What you Eat (New York: Bullfinch Press) pp.277-278; Zinfandelic www.zinfandelic.com

styles of premium Zinfandels that consumers find on the market.

Before offering our recommendations on the pairing of Zinfandels with food, we present here a listing of the different styles of the premium Zinfandels on the market.

Styles of Zinfandel

Light and Medium-Bodied Zinfandels are fruit forward and light to medium weight. The better-made ones reveal ripe red and/or black fruit with flavors of cherries, raspberries, blueberries, red plum, and cranberries. They also show the spicy nature of the varietal with hints of sweet oak, licorice and a persistent finish.

Bold and Lush Zinfandels show intense fruit flavors and ample tannins. They are rich and flavorful and are often produced from vineyards with old vines. They show intense red and black fruit, sometimes very ripe, with flavors of blackberries, blueberries, and plum with briary and sometimes creosote notes. They see a bit more new oak, and it's more likely to be French. Taken to the extreme, these wines can show high alcohol and an unctuous mouth feel.

Old Vine Zinfandels are crafted from very old vines, almost always 50+ years old and sometimes 100+, often planted with other mixed black varieties in a field blend. These vines have small berries and very low yields. As a result, they have a firmer structure, complex and often loamy/earthy in character with black cherry and black raspberry fruit and possible notes of tobacco and underbrush.

Zinfandel Food Pairings

Beef



Zinfandel pairs magnificently with beef and one can hardly go wrong choosing Zinfandel to drink with a charcoal broiled rib-eye steak, or rib-eye steak au poivre, New York strip steak, filet mignon or other grilled meats. A thick cut that is crusty and charred would do well with a bold flavored Zinfandel

with good density, and tannic grip. Zinfandel also pairs beautifully with other grilled meats such as grilled Asian beef kebabs or shish kebabs. Zinfandel also pairs well with roast beef, beef stroganoff, short ribs of beef and other cuts for braising and barbecuing such as brisket, skirt steak or flank steak.

If serving grilled hamburgers or chili burgers at home or ordering them in a restaurant, think of pairing them with moderately priced medium-weight Zinfandels that have some spice but not so much oak that they risk dominating

the burger. On the other hand, if the hamburger combines ground sirloin with ground brisket, a reliable old vine Zinfandel would work well. Sirloin burgers with blue cheese and arugula and chile con carne are other dishes that pair beautifully with all styles of Zinfandel.



Pork



BBQ baby back ribs and Zinfandel is a heavenly combination. But one needs to take into account how the ribs were prepared and what rubs

and sauces were used. A little know-how will prove useful in making the correct pairing. Roast pork loin, pork shoulder, pork chops can all be paired with light to medium-styled Zinfandels. Succulent roast boneless pork loin is one of the best pairings for this style. Pork with prunes and Zinfandel is also divine. Medium Zinfandels also go well with smoked sausage jambalaya and pork skewers with spicy red wine marinade. Another option is Pork Tonkatsu, a Japanese dish served with richly spiced curry sauce. The spice and savory sweet quality of this dish make it an ideal pairing partner for Zinfandel.

Lamb



Rack of lamb and Zinfandel pair beautifully, if the lamb is kept juicy, tender and rare and the wine is medium to full-bodied. Darker fruited Zinfandels with intense blackberry fruit would not be

as good for pairing rack of lamb as red fruited wines, especially if the lamb is medium rare. Lamb chops with spicy Thai peanut Sauce would probably pair best with a red fruity Zinfandel. Lamb burgers pair well with medium-bodied Zinfandel as do lamb stew and lamb shepherd's pie.

One of the more exciting dishes to pair with Zinfandel is roasted bone-in leg of lamb. There are many different ways to season a leg of lamb for roasting. The one we like for



Zinfandel is a paste of garlic olive oil and rosemary. We also like to serve it with root vegetables. Roast leg of lamb with anchovies also goes beautifully with Zinfandel. Braised lamb shanks with mint-parsley pesto is another savory dish for pairing with Zinfandel for a festive holiday like Passover.

Poultry



Zinfandel and BBQ or grilled chicken pair well together, provided the BBQ sauce doesn't overwhelm the wine, and the bold lush fruitiness of the wine doesn't overwhelm the chicken. Fried chicken can also pair well with

Zinfandel.

Pasta and Italian Specialties

Zinfandels pair extremely well with pasta dishes. Light to medium style Zinfandels pair best with simple preparations of pasta with olive oil, herbs and vegetables like roasted butternut squash. Bigger Zinfandels do well with hearty dishes like spaghetti and meat balls or lasagna. Likewise, Italian sausages with green peppers and onions pair beautifully with all styles of Zinfandel.



Cheeses and Dessert

Zinfandel helps cheeses shine. Try medium and bold Zinfandels with strong and rich cheeses like Roquefort, Feta, Stilton, Double Gloucester, aged Gruyere, Havarti, Gorgonzola, Parmesan and Cheddar.

Summary: Tips on Pairing Zinfandel and Food

- Keep in mind there are different styles of Zinfandel. Learning about their characteristics will help select the best pairing of wine and food.
- Try a variety of the Zinfandels from top producers reviewed in this report for pairing.
- Marinating meat with Zinfandel will add to the flavor of the dish and enhance the spicy character of the wine.
- When preparing stews or Daubes with wine, use Zinfandel and pair it with the same wine or an even better one for the meal.
- Zinfandels love most smoked meats.
- Spiced BBQ and curry are divine with Zinfandel.
- Zinfandel is a good foil to edgier flavors like soy, sweet and sour and even wasabi.
- Avoid serving Zinfandel with oysters, seafood, and shellfish.

Zinfandel Producers: Profiles and Tasting Notes



In this section we provide brief profiles of many of California's noteworthy Zinfandel producers along with tasting notes and ratings of their wines. In all, we tasted almost 400 Zinfandels for this report.

For our tastings, we travelled to California for 10 days visiting producers in Napa Valley, Sonoma County, Lodi, and Amador County and the Sierra Foothills. We also attended a Zinfandel tasting for the trade in San Francisco organized by ZAP. In addition to our California tastings, we conducted tasting of samples sent by producers to the International Wine Review offices.

Our tastings focused primarily on the Zinfandels from the 2015, 2014 and 2013 vintages. However, we did taste many older vintages, as well. Many producers have their own estate vineyards and may also source grapes from multiple locations. The profiles and tasting notes specify grape sources when known. While many of the wineries listed here only produce Zinfandel, others produce Zinfandels as part of more diversified portfolios.

We follow the 100 point system in our evaluations, although we do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. As usual, we employ the following scale:

- 95 and above - A wine of distinction
- 91-94 - A wine of outstanding or superior quality
- 89-90 - A wine of very good to excellent quality
- 87-88 - A wine of good quality
- 85-86 - A wine of fair or acceptable quality
- 84 and below - Not recommended

We commonly add a + to a point score to indicate our judgment that a wine is deemed to be of higher quality than its point score but is not at the next quality level. That said, we urge our readers to look at our comments that help explain our ratings and provide more useful information about a wine than a simple number. We review unfinished wines in barrel or tank, but do not rate them. These wines are marked "NR".



A. Rafanelli Winery (Dry Creek)
A. Rafanelli is a small, family operated winery producing a limited quantity of high quality Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. The small rustic winery sits on a knoll overlooking the valley, and is surrounded by terraced hillside vineyards. Alberto Rafanelli, an Italian immigrant, founded the winery in the early 1900's. The Rafanelli family is now in its fourth generation of growing grapes and making wine in the Dry Creek Valley. www.arafanelliwinery.com

A. Rafanelli 2014 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$42) 89

The A. Rafanelli offering, a classic Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, reveals earthy underbrush and dark cherry fruit flavors. It is nicely balanced although it is slightly brawny with dry tannins on the finish.



Acorn Winery
(Russian River Valley).
Bill and Betsy Nachbaur purchased Alegria Vineyards in 1990,

taking over a property in Russian River Valley that was first cultivated in the 1850s. Initially selling their grapes to other vineyards, they decided to make their own wine, and in 1996 Acorn Winery had its first release, an estate grown Sangiovese. From their 27-acre estate vineyard, they currently produce seven different wines, many of them field blends, and also sell their grapes to other wineries. Acorn's Zinfandels are made at Mauritsen Winery and crafted with the help of consulting winemakers, Clay Mauritsen, Jeff Cohn, and Kent Rosenblum. Acorn Zinfandels are of excellent quality. www.acornwinery.com

Acorn 2014 A-Block Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$50)

91 The A-Block Zinfandel Alegria Vineyards displays a dark ruby color with complex notes of black and red fruit, slate and black pepper. It is medium weight with firm tannins, a rich mouth feel and good length on the finish. **Acorn 2013 Zinfandel Russian River Valley 92**
This offering is a wine of elegance and refinement. Dark ruby in color, almost opaque, it offers aromas of dark cherry with a hint of earth. On the palate it reveals a silky mouth feel, excellent balance and good acidity with persistent fruitiness on the finish. **Acorn 2014 Zinfandel Heritage Vines Alegria Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$48) 92**
This is an earthy and complex Zinfandel offering fresh red fruit flavors, toasted oak, herbs and a hint of minerals. It is beautiful and vibrant with a medium-weight, an elegant mouth feel and a persistent finish.

Adelaida Cellars (Paso Robles) Established in 1981 and owned and operated by the Van Steenwyk family, Adelaida is located at 1800' in the Santa Lucia Mountains. Shallow chalky mountain soils lead to low yields and concentrated fruit. Twenty-two different varieties are grown, including Rhone and Portuguese, on 157 acres of 7 distinct estate vineyards, including the almost 50-year-old original 35-acre Pinot Noir vineyard of Hoffman Mountain Ranch, planted by Dr. Stanley Hoffman in 1964. Other key vineyards include Anna's Vineyard, 1595-1935' elevation on calcareous limestone soil, and the Viking Estate Vineyard, planted in 1991 on chalk rock soils with 30° slopes. UC Davis grad Jeremy Weintraub, winemaker since 2012, is producing some superb wines including Michael's Estate Zinfandel. Adelaida is organically farmed and SIP certified. www.adelaida.com

Adelaida 2015 Estate Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$30) 89-90

This is a young Zin revealing briary dark red berry fruit, high acidity and firm tannins on the back end. Still quite youthful, it will settle down and likely improve with more bottle aging. **Adelaida 2014 Zinfandel Michael's Estate Paso Robles (\$40) 93** This terrific Zinfandel is sourced from Michael's dry farmed, head-trained vineyard. It is a special vineyard and this barrel selection exhibits excellent plum and cranberry. It is pure and spicy on the palate with hints of black pepper. It is mouth filling with lovely tannins and a persistent finish.

ALEXANDER
VALLEY
VINEYARDS



Alexander Valley Vineyards (Alexander Valley) has been producing good quality wines since the mid-1970s from the 600-acre Wetzel estate vineyard, which was purchased from growers Magie and Harry Wetzel in 1962. The Wetzels are continuing a legacy of family farming and winemaking. The winery produces a large variety of wines including several fruit forward, dense and earthy Zinfandels, which are offered at impressively low prices. www.avwine.com

Alexander Valley Vineyards 2013 Redemption Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$22) 90

The Redemption has an opaque garnet color and offers a very spicy raspberry and dark fruited nose of cinnamon, nutmeg, and prominent sweet oak. It has rich extract on the palate with a good tannic backbone and a long finish. A beautiful wine. **Alexander Valley Vineyards 2013 Sin Zin Alexander Valley (\$20) 89** This Zinfandel offering reveals dark plum and black cherry flavors with a lot of finesse on a medium-bodied palate. It is round in the mouth with ripe red berry compote, a hint of spice and a long finish. Its no sin to drink this Zin. **Alexander Valley Vineyards 2013 Temptation Zinfandel California (\$14) 90** This is a terrific wine for the price. It has a rich and earthy nose with a hint of sweet oak. It is soft and round on the palate, lush and bold in the mouth, and long

and persistent on the finish. Load up. **Alexander Valley Vineyards 2013 Alexander School Reserve Old Vine Zinfandel Alexander Valley (\$45) 92** Medium dark ruby. This 100% Zinfandel offering displays rich and dense red and black fruit aromas and flavors with hints of brown spice and vanilla. It is nicely balanced with good acidity and vivacity on the finish. Sourced from 50 year-old hillside vines. Aged 24 months in American oak.



Andis Wines (Amador County) Janis Akuna and Andrew Friedlander founded Andis in 2010 and hired Bordeaux native Philippe Melka's winemaking team. The Andis vineyard was planted in 1978 and now has 20 acres under vine, including 7.2 acres of 38 year old dry-farmed Zinfandel.

Andis also purchases fruit from other growers in the Sierra Foothills. It makes a Zinfandel from the Original Grandpere Vineyard and does a good job at it. www.andiswines.com

Andis 2013 Estate Zinfandel Shenandoah Valley (\$25) 89+

The 2013 Estate Zinfandel offers aromas of raspberry and plum with a touch of vanilla spice. Aged in French oak, it is full in the mouth and fresh tasting with firm tannins and a medium long finish. **Andis 2013 Original Gran Pere Zinfandel Shenandoah Valley (\$39) 90**

The 2013 Original Grand Pere is sourced from the iconic vineyard planted in 1869 and today owned by Terry Harvey. It offers attractive aromas of red berries, plum, Asian spices and earth. Fermented in open bins with oak chips added to stabilize color and support tannin development. The wine is nicely balanced and has Grenache-like fruitiness on the mid-palate and finish.



Artezin (Napa Valley) specializes in wines from the heritage grapes Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Carignane. Each of their wines is hand crafted and made with a light hand so that they express their place of origin and their true varietal characteristics. Winemaker Randle Johnson works hand in hand with

growers in areas renowned for growing these grapes from California's Mendocino County, Sonoma's Dry Creek Valley and Amador County. The wines are well made and of good value. www.artezinwines.com

Artezin 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Mendocino County (\$18) 89

The 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel is ripe and fruit forward, offering dark ruby colors and black and peppery red berry fruit flavors on the palate. It is plush, full-bodied and mouth filling with soft round tannins and a long finish. **Artezin 2013 Zinfandel Everett Ridge Dry Creek Valley (\$25) 90** Everett Ridge is a step up in quality from the Old Vine Zinfandel. Fruit forward in character, it offers attractive dark red berry fruit on the nose and

is smooth and mouth filling on the palate. It is nicely balanced and concentrated through to the finish. **Artezin 2013 Zinfandel Collins Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$36) 91** This Zinfandel is the finest wine of this trio. It is endowed with earthy red berries and plum and hints of licorice. It reveals good mid-palate richness, full mouth feel, firm tannins and a long finish. Well done.



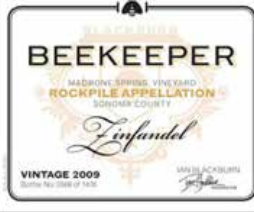
Bedrock Wine Co.

(Sonoma County) was founded in 2007 by Morgan Twain-Peterson in a 550 square-foot, former chicken coop with 8 foot ceilings and no fermentation space. Morgan is the son of Joel

Peterson, founder of Ravenswood Winery. After six years of Bedrock being a one-man-show, Morgan was able to talk his best friend, Chris Cottrell, into moving to California from New York to join him. They now happily have a little more space to move around in and share the same objectives that guided the winery at the start. Bedrock produces some of the finest old vineyard Zinfandels in California. Morgan also owns the old Sonoma Valley vineyard Bedrock with his father. www.bedrockwineco.com

Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Dolinsek Ranch Heritage Russian River Valley (\$45) 93 A voluptuous, layered, dense wine of gorgeous complexity, the Dolinsek field blend offers red and black berry and cherry fruit, bright acidity, and refined purity on a vibrant, succulent palate. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Evangelho Vineyard Heritage Contra Costa County (\$35) 93** Made from a distinct old vineyard of Zinfandel, Carignane, and Mourvedre, the Evangelho Vineyard field blend offers tobacco, forest floor, and violet flower scents and a perfumed palate of briary dark fruit and slate like minerals with rich nuances of herbs and a fine focus and firm structure. Made in 600 gallon foudres and larger format barrels, about 5 percent new French oak. **Bedrock Wine Company 2014 Lorenzo's Heritage Teldeschi Ranch Dry Creek Valley 94** From one of California's true landmark vineyards comes this well-structured wine made from Zinfandel and several heritage black varieties. While showing a heady perfume with bright red fruit accents, the palate is firm with great acid balance, and elegant mouth feel, and a great, prolonged finish. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Old Vine Zinfandel California 91** This wine is the one Bedrock Zinfandel that gets widely distributed. It has an average vine age of 82 years with fruit sourced widely about 70% from Sonoma County. The 2015 vintage is about 90% Zinfandel, according to Morgan. It offers an attractive nose of red fruit and cracked pepper and a vibrant palate of brambly berries with spice and roasted herb notes, finishing with fine tannins. All the fruit sources are separately fermented and later blended. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Pagani Ranch Heritage Sonoma Valley 94** Floral and spicy, this Zinfandel and mixed blacks wine is rich, dense, and firmly structured with violet, blueberry, licorice and loam on an exuberant palate. The nose offers a multifaceted bouquet

of scents including a lively rose petal note. From a vineyard parcel on Sonoma Mountain soils in Kenwood planted on Lenoir rootstock, probably around 1885. **Bedrock Wine Company 2014 Papera Ranch Heritage Russian River Valley (\$45) 92** The Papers Ranch Heritage is a field blend of Zinfandel and 40% Carignane and 11 other varieties. It's a meaty, savory wine with thick, brambly fruit. It shows dense extract and a prolonged finish. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Proprietary Red Nervo Ranch Heritage Alexander Valley 93** A bit closed aromatically at the time of tasting, but the palate on this heritage wine was open and emphatic with excellent depth of black and blue fruit along with bright dark red cherry accents. An unctuous wine with a meaty syrup-like finish. A field blend of 45% Zinfandel, Negrette, Petite Sirah, Grenache and other mixed blacks from a Geysersville parcel located across the street from Ridge's Geysersville vineyard. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Proprietary Red Oakville Farmhouse Oakville 95** Semi opaque blue-black. Great fruit in the aromatics, pure and expressive. This is a well-structured wine with a cascade of deep, dark, rich flavors and a sweet kiss of blackberries on an outstandingly long and vibrant finish. From a 2.5 acre parcel that sits at the southern edge of the To Kalon Vineyard that is the oldest vineyard in Oakville. **Bedrock Wine Company 2012 Under the Wire Sparkling Old Vine Zinfandel Sonoma Valley (\$45) 92** California's most unique sparkling wine, made from field blends of 25 different varieties dating from 1888-1895 and picked for sparkling at 19 brix. Oeil de Perdrix in color and rich and flavorful with a red wine character, this is a crisp, fresh, and vibrant sparkler. 2 g RS. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Zinfandel Carlisle Vineyard Russian River Valley 94** Lush, heady, succulent and full bodied, this Zinfandel offers expressive briary dark berry fruit layered with Asian spices, loamy earth, and notes of graphite and creosote. It's a voluptuous, big wine with a long life ahead of it. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Zinfandel Esola Vineyard Amador County (Shenandoah) (\$35) 94** Offering an elegant, floral and red fruited nose, the Esola Zinfandel offers a beguiling, extremely fresh and pure palate that is perfectly balanced and finely structured with firm, upfront tannins and a luscious, inviting finish. An excellent example of high altitude, Amador County Zinfandel. **Bedrock Wine Company 2015 Zinfandel Monte Rosso Sonoma Valley 95** What is it about the Monte Rosso Vineyard that gives such extra special elegance and depth to its wines? Planted in the 1880s on a 1000' high bench with red clay soils on a west facing slope, this exceptional Zinfandel offers a sexy, floral bouquet of red fruit with an orange citrus accent. The wine is full in the mouth, spicy and unctuous and very, very rich, especially on the extra-long finish.



Beekeeper Cellars (Sonoma County) Ian Blackburn is owner and winemaker of this tiny winery in Sonoma. He crafts his wine with the assistance of his good friend and winemaker Craig Mauritsen. One of the first in his family to graduate

from college, Ian is currently enrolled in the Master of Wine program. Zinfandel is one of Ian's favorite grapes and he crafts the three outstanding Zinfandel wines reviewed below. www.beekeepercellars.com

Beekeeper Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Hidden Hillside Reserve Sonoma County (\$85) 95

The Beekeeper Hidden Hillside Reserve has an opaque ruby color and is soft on the attack followed by bold and spicy black fruit, excellent density of flavor, and a persistent finish.

Beekeeper Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Montecillo Vineyard Sonoma County (\$60) 92

This Beekeeper Zinfandel from the 1500 ft. Montecillo Vineyard is a delicious fruit forward wine with lovely raspberry and dark cherry flavors. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, it reveals good density of fruit on the palate with excellent acidity and a long finish.

Beekeeper Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Secret Stones Rockpile, Sonoma County (\$65) 93

Opaque. A delicious fruit forward wine sourced from Madrone Spring Vineyard, Rockpile. It displays lovely raspberry and dark cherry flavors and has good density of fruit on the palate with excellent acidity and a long dry finish.

Beltane Ranch 2014 Estate Zinfandel "Heins Block" Sonoma County (\$44) 92

This offering from the 105-acre Beltane Ranch reveals rich spicy plum and black cherry aromas, It is fruit forward on the palate with a velvety smooth mouth feel and concentrated fruit flavors. It shows perfect balance and a long fruit rich finish. A delicious blend of Zinfandel, Alicante Bouchet and Petite Sirah.

Black Cat 2014 Zinfandel Howell Mountain (\$60) 90

This tiny winery on Howell Mountain has produced a delicious Zinfandel. It is fruity in character with red and black berry flavors, toasted oak and a hint of herbs. It is stylish and nicely balanced with round firm tannins and an elegant finish. Winemaker Tracey Reichow has done a fine job with this wine. Only several hundred cases are made annually, and they are usually spoken for by customers on their mailing list.



Boeger Winery (Sierra Foothills) The Boeger Winery estate was homesteaded during the gold rush and later turned into a fruit and nut farm and winery. The family made wine from Mission grapes and an early clone of

Zinfandel. It was the first winery in El Dorado County to become operational after Prohibition. Greg and Sue Boeger bought the property in 1972; Greg Boeger experiments with Italian varieties and produces three Zinfandels. www.boegerwinery.com

Boeger Winery 2014 Hangtown Zin El Dorado (\$14) 88+

This is a bold tasting Zinfandel blended with Barbera, Pinot Noir, Petite Sirah and Tempranillo. It offers aromas of blackberry and black cherry fruit, earth and spice. On the palate it is a bit rustic with good intensity of fruit and spice, firm tannins, and a little warmth from the 15.5 alc. It has a nice long finish.

Boeger Winery 2015 Zinfandel El Dorado (\$22) 88

The 2015 Zinfandel is medium weight and has a lovely red ruby color. It offers aromas of ripe black cherry, plum and baking spices. On the palate it reveals youthful fruit-forward red berry fruit flavors, firm dry tannins and a pleasant long finish.

Boeger Winery 2015 Rosa Canina Zinfandel El Dorado (\$22) 87

The Rosa Cantina displays a spicy red fruited nose of red raspberry and cedar. It is light weight on the mid-palate with a tannic and dry finish.



Borjón (Amador County) This winery is owned and operated by "Isy" Borjón and wife Eliana. Isy's parents migrated to the Shenandoah Valley of Amador County from Guanajuato, Mexico, over 30 years ago.

Having learned viticulture and winemaking on the job from the family's vineyard service company, Isy began the Borjón winery in 2005, purchasing grapes from top growers in Amador County. The three wines reviewed here are all well-made and fine examples of Amador County artisanal winemaking at its best. www.borjonwinery.com.

Borjón Winery 2014 Zinfandel Reposado Shenandoah Valley (\$25) 89+

The Zinfandel Reposado is a blend of Amador County Zinfandels. Medium ruby in color, it offers aromas of spicy black cherry, fruitcake, cola and red pomegranate on the nose. On the palate, it is lush and shows good density of flavor, perfect acidity and freshness with hints of vanilla.

Borjón Winery 2015 Zinfandel Reserva Shenandoah Valley (\$30) 92

This flagship Zinfandel is sourced from the head-trained, dry-farmed Storey Vineyard, which dates back to 1904. It offers delicious red berry fruit with a note of vanilla spice on the nose. It is full flavored with good density and freshness, round tannins and excellent length. A beautiful wine. **Borjón Winery**

2013 Diferente Red Wine Shenandoah (\$45) 91 This ultra-premium wine is a tasty blend of 50% Zinfandel and 50% Barbera. Aged in 100% new French oak, it reveals outstanding flavors of dark cherry and blackberry fruit. It is perfectly balanced and refined on the palate and made for aging.

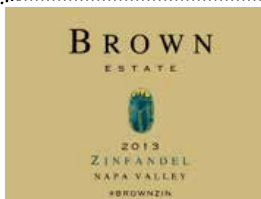


Brecon Estate (Paso Robles) The wines at Brecon Estate are crafted by Welsh winemaker Damian Grindley, who is also the estate's owner. Brecon produces a wide variety of wines including Zinfandel, and all wines are

sold exclusively at the winery. The high quality of the Brecon Zinfandels suggests a trip to the winery would be a rewarding experience. www.breconestate.com

Brecon Estate 2014 Zinfandel Central Coast (\$46) 91 This Central Coast Zinfandel is a blend of the Four Hearts Vineyard in Paso Robles and the Mamimi Vineyard in Monterey and includes a touch of Petit Sirah and Tempranillo to give the wine added length. In contrast to Brecon's Zinfandel and Tannat blend, this Zinfandel exhibits more spicy red berry and black cherry fruit aromas and flavors. It has a lovely mid-palate also showing good density of flavor and length.

Brecon Estate 2014 Zinfandel/Tannat Paso Robles Adelaida (\$52) 92 This 2014 unique blend of Zinfandel (65%) and Tannat (35%) is a delicious and robust offering from this boutique winery in Paso Robles. It is a bold flavored wine revealing pretty blackberry fruit, licorice, earth and toasted oak. It is nicely balanced on the palate with firm tannins inform the ripe Tannat. Leave it in the bottle for a year or so or decant before serving. Unfortunately, the wine is made in small quantities.



Brown Estate (Napa Valley) The Brown family began growing grapes in the eastern hills of the Napa Valley in the early to mid- 1980s. Their first planting included 10 acres of Zinfandel, which was followed a decade later by 40 more

acres, primarily of Zinfandel with some Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. Initially, they sold all their grapes to local wineries until 1994 when they decided to make wine under their own label and hired the talented winemaker Duane Dappen of D-Cubed. In September 2016 they bottled their 20th vintage of Brown Estate Zinfandel, and today they also produce Chiles Valley Zinfandel, Mickey's Block Zinfandel, and a magnificent Zinfandel blend with the intriguing name of "Chaos Theory". www.brownestate.com

Brown Estate 2013 Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$45) 92 This Napa Valley Zinfandel is dark fruited and bold flavored with outstanding concentration on the palate. It is perfectly balanced with flavors of black cherry, boysenberry and notes of chocolate. It reveals a soft texture, firm round

tannins and a long finish. **Brown Estate 2013 Chaos Theory Napa Valley (\$40) 92** The Chaos Theory is a beautiful blend of 68% Zinfandel, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Sirah. It is an elegant wine, perfectly balanced with flavors of blackberry, dried black cherry, leather, and touches of earth and spice. It is medium-bodied with a lovely mouth feel, good density of flavor, round tannins and a long finish. Delicious.



Burbank Ranch (Paso Robles) Located in the El Pomar District of Paso Robles, the Burbank Ranch Vineyard & Winery is an 83-acre property, of which 46 acres are planted with vines. The winery produces 16 estate-grown varieties including Zinfandel. Veteran Steve Anglim became the estate's winemaker in 2011. www.burbank.com

Burbank Ranch 2013 Fall Colors Zinfandel El Pomar Paso Robles (\$34) 88 This offering displays a light pink color and lovely fresh summer red berries on the nose. It has ripe cherry flavors on the palate with a touch of residual sugar, high acidity and a clean dry palate. **Burbank Ranch 2014 Summer Dreams Zinfandel Rose El Pomar Paso Robles (\$29) 87+** This Zinfandel rosé displays a medium ruby red color with hints of brown spice and cedar on the nose. It has a nice flavor profile with accents of red cherry, but overall a bit dilute with a dry finish.

Callstar Cellars 2014 ZaZa Zin Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$22) 88 This offering from Callstar reveals a dark ruby color and aromas of dried cherry and cranberry. On the palate it has brambly tart fruit flavors, a dry mid-palate with hints of earth and minerals and a firm finish.



Carlisle (Russian River Valley) Mike and Kendall Officer launched their Carlisle Winery and Vineyards in 1998 with the goal of creating small lots of distinctive, world-class wines from some of California's most special and unique vineyards—the old vine Zinfandel and field blends found throughout

California and especially in Sonoma County. While preparing Report #44: The Wines of Sonoma County, we first sat down with Mike at his new winery to taste his old vine Zinfandels and mixed blacks. This year we once again had the rare opportunity to meet him at the winery and taste every Zinfandel wine in his portfolio. Total production is about 7 thousand cases. The 2015s were only bottled three weeks before we tasted, them but they showed remarkable ripeness and excellence balance. Most of these wines are only available from the winery. www.carlislewinery.com

Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$30) 91 This delicious wine is composed of many top vineyards planted between 1895-1934. It is a vibrant wine with aromas of dense and earthy red and black cherries and plum. On the palate it is beautifully balanced and concentrated with briary flavors, soft tannins and a persistent finish. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$37) 92** Deep and richly flavored earthy black cherry fruit define this wine which is lush and mouth filling. Petite Sirah from Mounts Vineyard is part of the blend and contributes some savory accents. **Carlisle 2015 Limerick Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$47) 94** This wine is sourced from Limerick Lane Vineyard's 1910 vineyard block and consists of 98% Zinfandel and 2% blacks. It is elegant and refined with lovely aromas of red berry, plum and a hint of garrique. Mouth filling and spicy with good mid-palate intensity, it is perfectly balanced and has a rich and juicy finish. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Montafi Ranch Russian River Valley (\$47) 92** The Montafi Ranch consists of 89% Zinfandel and 11% mixed blacks. Dark ruby red in color, it displays fragrant aromas of pure dark red cherry. It reveals excellent volume in the mouth with good structure, lovely purity and remarkable refinement. Aged in 26% new French oak, there is considerable fruitness and perfect balance on the finish. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Papera Ranch Russian River Valley (\$47) 93** A blend of 96% Zinfandel and 4% Carignane, the Zinfandel Papera Ranch is a gorgeous wine that is very soft, round and juicy with dark spicy earthy fruit. It is nicely structured and approachable even at this young age. William-Selyem also sources Zinfandel from Papera Ranch. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Mancini Ranch Russian River Valley (\$47) 94** This is a new wine for Carlisle from the same soil types as Papera Ranch, which is located nearby. Planted in 1922 during Prohibition, this vineyard has a relatively high percentage (15%) of mixed black varieties compared to Papera Ranch. A remarkable wine, it boasts fragrant aromas of red berries and a palate both rich in red fruit flavor and texture, along with bright acidity and a long finish. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Carlisle Vineyard (\$47) 92** A blend of 88% Zinfandel and 12% mixed blacks, this wine has an opaque ruby robe with a dark cherry and plum nose. It is quite chewy, tannic and fruit forward with good density on the mid-palate and a long finish. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Bedrock Vineyard Sonoma Valley (\$47) 92** This is a bold and flavorful wine sourced from specific blocks of the Bedrock Vineyard. It reveals lots of red plum aromas on the nose and is ripe and spicy on the palate with loads of black cherry fruit. It is rather tannic at this stage and needs some time. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Rossi Ranch Sonoma Valley (\$47) 92** The Rossi Ranch vines were planted in 1910. The wine offers lovely raspberry fruit. It is silky and elegant on the palate with light peppery notes. **Carlisle 2015 Zinfandel Monte Rosso Vineyard Sonoma Valley (\$47) 93** This big chewy wine displays an opaque color with ripe dark red and black fruit. On the palate it reveals high acidity, good intensity of dark red berry fruit, ripe juicy mouth feel, soft tannins and a persistent finish. Give this one an additional year of aging for maximum enjoyment.



Carol Shelton Wines (Sonoma County) Carol Shelton is a pioneer in the industry and considered by many to be the "Queen of Zin". She has earned this title by producing some of California's finest Zinfandels. Her winery is located in Sonoma, but she sources grapes from vineyards

in several regions and produces several top notch Zinfandels. Stylistically, her Zinfandels are fruit forward with good mid-palate richness and excellent balance. www.carolshelton.com

Carol Shelton 2014 Karma Reserve Sonoma County (\$26) 90+ The Karma Reserve is sourced from the Bastoni Vineyard, one of the finest vineyards in Sonoma County. A field blend of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Alicante Bouschet, it offers flavors of big spicy black fruit, tart dark red berries and hints of vanilla. Aged 18 months in used and neutral oak barrels, it reveals concentrated fruit flavors, round tannins, and a long finish. **Carol Shelton 2014 Mancini Old Vine Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$38) 91** Dark ruby in color, this offering displays ripe plum fruit and earthy aromas. It is soft and velvety smooth on the palate with good density of flavor. It has beautiful balance, soft round tannins and a long finish. Lovely wine. **Carol Shelton 2014 Monga Zin Old Vines Zinfandel Cucamonga Valley (\$21) 92** Sourced from old vines planted in 1890 in the Cucamonga Valley, the Monga Zin offers lovely ripe red raspberry flavors with a soft mouth feel. Like all of Carol Shelton's wines, it is perfectly balanced with soft round tannins and a long finish. **Carol Shelton 2014 Peace Land Zinfandel Fountaingrove District (\$33) 93** Lush and rich tasting on the attack. Very flavorful dark raspberry with soft velvet texture and beautiful balance. Shows hints of chocolate, spice, and sweet oak. Gorgeous wine. **Carol Shelton 2014 Rocky Reserve Rockpile (\$36) 91** The Rocky Reserve Zinfandel comes from the Florence Vineyard in Rockpile, situated 1400 feet above Lake Sonoma and Dry Creek Valley. It is a beautifully tailored wine offering aromas of blue and blackberry fruit, plum, spice, and dark chocolate. It is nicely structured and has a rich persistent finish. **Carol Shelton 2014 Wild Thing Mendocino County (\$19) 91** The Wild Thing displays a dark red garnet color and lovely red berry fruit and spice on the palate. It is fruit forward with notes of underbrush and dried herbs; it has nice density, a soft texture, and a long finish.



Cedarville Vineyard (Amador County) Cedarville is a small family winery that produces stunning handcrafted Zinfandels. The winery is owned and operated by Jonathan Lachs and Susan Marks and is located in the tiny town of Fair Play in the Sierra Foothills. Their grapes are sourced from sustainably-farmed, estate vineyards with granitic soils at 2500 feet elevation. Outstanding viticulture and winemaking come together at this lovely El Dorado estate. www.cedarvillevineyard.com

Cedarville 2014 Zinfandel Estate Fair Play Amador County

(\$25) 91 The 2014 Estate Zinfandel is a pretty wine, exhibiting a red ruby color and aromas of fresh black raspberries. It also offers excellent balance and crisp acidity like a cool climate wine. Very well done. Grapes farmed organically. **Cedarville 2014 The Rules of Fair Play El Dorado (\$36) 93** This wine is a spicy red blend of 62% Zinfandel and 38% Petit Sirah. It is an elegant and complex wine offering ripe and spicy dark cherry fruit, good mid-palate flavor, excellent structure and acidity, silky soft tannins and a long finish. Superb.



Chase Cellars (Napa Valley) Chase Cellars has as its estate vineyard the Hayne Vineyard, one of the oldest and most famous Zinfandel vineyards in the Napa Valley. The owner of Chase is Katie Hayne Simpson (shown here), a descendant of family members who first purchased the land in 1872.

Russell Bevan is the winemaker. www.chasecellars.com

Chase 2015 Zinfandel Hayne Vineyard Napa Valley 94

The magnificent 2015 Zinfandel Hayne Vineyard, sourced from one of the finest vineyards in Napa Valley, is ripe and dark fruited, revealing a good deal of phenolic intensity (30 days of 100+ heat during the growing season), which contributed to high phenolic ripeness and flavors of black cherry and coffee. Overall, the wine is full-bodied and beautifully balanced with layers of pure flavor and shows great aging potential. **Chase 2014 Zinfandel Hayne Vineyard Reserve Napa Valley 96** The Zinfandel Hayne Vineyard Reserve displays a bold meaty quality and is very spicy with round firm tannins. It reveals layers of concentrated flavors of black cherry, toast, herbs and toasted oak. A big wine with fine breeding that will reward patience.



Cline Family Cellars

(Sonoma County) Cline is the well-established, family owned and operated winery of Fred and Nancy Cline. In 1982 the family purchased the defunct Filipo Winery in Oakley and began producing Rhone-style and Zinfandel wines and sold grapes to Bonny Doon and other California Rhone rangers. In the 90s, the Cline Family developed acreage in Sonoma's Los Carneros and moved the production facility there. The UC Davis graduate and talented veteran winemaker, Charlie Tsegeletos, has been crafting the wines at Cline since 2002. www.clinecellars.com

Cline Cellars 2014 Bridgehead Zinfandel Contra Costa County (\$37) 91

The Bridgehead Zinfandel displays a dark ruby red color with hints of cloves, underbrush and plum skins on the nose. It is silky smooth on the attack, very dense and rich tasting with red fruit and spice and a long dark red fruit finish.

Cline Cellars 2014 Heritage Zinfandel Contra Costa County (\$43) 92

The 2014 Heritage Zinfandel is a beautiful and complex wine offering a spicy red-fruited nose with notes of loam. It has a silky attack of dried black cherries and raspberries, round firm tannins and a fruit rich finish.

Cline Cellars 2014 Live Oak Zinfandel Contra Costa County (\$37) 90+

The 2014 Live Oak Zinfandel is a bold and flavorful wine offering black fruit aromas and flavors with hints of honeyed oak and earth. It is silky smooth on the attack and very dense on the palate with notes of licorice and clove.

Cline Cellars 2013 Zinfandel Meadowbrook Ranch Vineyard Tehama County (\$60) 93

The Zinfandel Meadowbrook Ranch is dark ruby in color and soft and lush on the palate. Endowed with good density of black fruit flavor, it has a firm structure with somewhat dry tannins. It is packed with ripe fruit flavors with hints of forest floor herbaceousness. A wonderful wine. The best of this impressive lineup.

Cline 2014 Zinfandel Big Break Vineyard, Contra Costa County (\$37) 90

The Zinfandel Big Break Vineyard is bold flavorful wine offering ripe aromas and flavors of black cherry, spice and a hint of mint. Aged 12 months in new (40%) and used French oak, it is mouth filling with good concentration and alcohol (15.5) and a long finish.

Cline 2015 Zinfandel Ancient Vines Contra Costa County (\$15) 88+

Sourced from a selection of old dry-farmed Contra Costa estates, this young Zinfandel offers aromas and flavors of red berry fruit with hints of coffee. Aged in new and used oak, it is ripe and mouth filling with pure fruit notes and a finish of medium length.

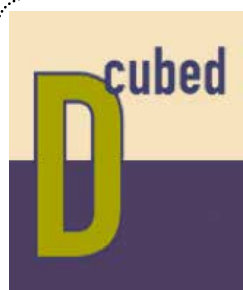
Cline 2014 Zinfandel Lodi (\$11) 88

is a delicious easy-drinking wine offering pure black cherry and strawberry flavors, spice and vanilla notes. It has good density of flavor, supple tannins and a persistent finish.

Cline Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$35) 91

The Zinfandel Sonoma County displays a medium ruby color and nose of honeyed spices, vanilla and red berries. It is silky on the attack with a terrific

structure, firm tannins, bright acidity and a medium long finish.



D-Cubed Cellars (Napa Valley)

Founded in 1994, D-cubed is a small winery that specializes in Zinfandel. Founder and winemaker Duane Dappen sources the grapes for his wines from a number of vineyards around Napa. In addition to enology studies at UC, Davis, Dappen acquired extensive winemaking experience at

Napa Valley wineries such as Grgich Hills, Storybook Mountain, Rombauer and Frank Family before launching D-Cubed. He produces balanced wines of power and finesse. He is one of Napa's top Zinfandel producers. www.dcubedcellars.com

D-cubed Cellars 2012 Zinfandel Korte Ranch Napa Valley (\$34) 93

This offering by D-cubed Cellars is a wine of power and finesse. It displays blackberries and boysenberries of great purity and density of flavor. On the palate it provides lovely texture and depth with polished tannins, a hint of toast, and a long finish. The grapes for this beauty are sourced from an old St. Helena vineyard planted in 1910. It is offered at a great price, too. Try this with Duane Dappen's Grilled Lamb Chops with California herb rub. **D-cubed Cellars 2012 Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$30) 88**

This Zinfandel displays a medium red garnet color and aromas of dried cherry and honeyed oak spice. Aged 26 months in oak, it has a silky texture, a dry mid-palate and a short finish. **D-cubed Cellars 2012 Zinfandel Brown Vineyard Napa Valley (\$45) 91**

This Zinfandel sourced from the Brown Vineyard displays dried cherry, herbs and underbrush on the nose. On the palate it is elegant and refined with dark cherry flavors and toasted oak. Pinot Noir-like, it has excellent acidity and lovely balance.



Dashe Vineyards (Dry Creek Valley) A husband and wife team--as well as an American and French winemaking team--Dashe Cellars specializes in Dry Creek and Alexander Valley Zinfandels. Michael Dashe, former assistant winemaker at Ridge Vineyards between 1990-1998, started making

Dry Creek Zinfandel under the Dashe label in 1996. His wife, Bordeaux-trained Anne Dashe, is an integral part of the winemaking and blending process at Dashe. Together, they make lush, richly-textured Zinfandels. Their Todd Ranch Old Vines Zinfandel is especially noteworthy. www.dashcellars.com

Dashe Cellars 2014 Dry Creek Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$26) 89 Medium dark ruby in color, this offering displays

fresh raspberry and red plum aromas on the nose with a hint of clove and baking spices. Soft and delicate on the palate, it is elegant with good acidity and freshness and a long finish. Great food wine. **Dashe Cellars 2014 Florence Vineyard Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$35) 90** Dark ruby red, this Zinfandel has a rather muted nose, but lovely ripe cherry and raspberry fruit on the palate. It has a soft, ripe, and sweetly fruity attack with a lush and silky texture, and a fruit rich finish. **Dashe Cellars 2014 The Comet Alexander Valley (\$35) 91** The Comet is a lovely blend of 58% Zinfandel, 30% Petite Sirah and 12% Carignane. Dark ruby in color it has a perfumed nose of black cherry and plum. On the palate, it reveals a creamy mouth feel with good intensity of red and black fruit and spices, finishing with an herbal/earthy note and good length. Aged 18 months in 85% new French oak. **Dashe Cellars 2014 Todd Brothers Ranch Old Vine Zinfandel Alexander Valley (\$35) 93** Opaque ruby in color, this is a lovely dark fruited wine, perfectly balanced and refined. It is endowed with dense and concentrated red and black fruit and firm tannins. A beautiful seamless wine with a persistent finish.



www.daywines.com

Day (Napa Valley) is a new label from veteran winemaker, Ehren Jordan. It marks his return to Zinfandel after years of producing outstanding Chardonnay and Pinot Noir on the Sonoma County coast. Ehren has had years of experience crafting Zinfandel for Larry Turley, and these wines show it. Ehren is a winemaker who allows site, variety, and vintage to define his wines. www.daywines.com

Day 2015 Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$27) 92 This

Zinfandel displays an opaque color and spicy, dark cherry and black raspberry scents. Vibrancy and freshness on the attack are accompanied by blackberry fruit flavors and earthy nuances. A big finish. **Day 2015 Zinfandel El Diablo Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$48) 90** The 2015 Zinfandel El Diablo Vineyard offers ripe aromas of dark cherry and plum. On the palate, it reveals chewy briary flavors and notes of tobacco and loam with a firm finish.

Day 2015 Zinfandel Grist Vineyard Dry Creek Valley (\$38) 93

This Zinfandel from the magnificent old Grist Vineyard, which dates back to the late 1800s, displays an opaque ruby color. It offers ripe blackberry and blueberry flavors with notes of graphite. Aged 11 months in 15% new and 85% neutral oak, it is soft and lush on the palate with good intensity of flavor, toasted oak, and a long finish. A beautiful wine.

Derby Wine Estates 2013 Maneater Paso Robles (\$32) 89

The Maneater is a blend of 64% Zinfandel and 36% Petit Sirah. It displays an opaque ruby color, moderate fruitiness on the nose, a lush texture and flavors of earth, tobacco, black cherry and plum. It is nicely balanced with firm tannins and finishes with medium length.

Dillian Winery

(Amador County)

Dillian is a small family winery specializing in Zinfandel, Barbera and Primitivo. The wines are handmade in small batch fermentation

tanks and aged in French and American oak barrels. Owner Tom Dillian has been growing high quality grapes in Amador County since 1972 and sells most of his fruit, except for what he uses for these wines. www.dillianwines.com

Dillian 2014 Zinfandel Tre Fratelli Shenandoah Valley

(\$25) 90+ The 2013 Zinfandel Tre Fratelli is a blend of 80% Zinfandel, 10% Barbera and 10% Primitivo. It offers lovely red cherry and pomegranate fruit aromas. Aged in used French and American oak for 15 months, it displays pure spicy flavors of red raspberry fruit, good acidity and a long finish with a silky texture. **Dillian 2014 Zinfandel Reserve Amador County (\$34) 91**

The 2014 Zinfandel Reserve offers aromas of dark red berries with hints of toast and herbs. Aged in new French and American oak for 15 months, it reveals rich red and black fruit flavors, round tannins and a solid finish. **Dillian 2014 Zinfandel Hangtree Amador County (\$28) 92**

The Zinfandel Hangtree offers lovely red raspberry aromas and displays mid-palate flavor and richness with hints of vanilla and chocolate. Sensual and silky, it has excellent balance, round tannins and a long finish.



Easton Wines (Amador County) Easton is part of the Terre Rouge-Easton winery located in Amador County. The Terre Rouge portfolio consists of Rhone wines and the Easton portfolio of Zinfandel and other varieties. Bill Easton, pictured here, is founder and winemaker and has been making wines for over 25 years. The Easton wines reviewed here are Pinot Noir-like and of outstanding quality. They are cellared by the winery for

several years before release, and they are incredible values. www.terrerougewines.com

Easton 2011 Zinfandel "E" Fiddletown (\$25) 93 The Easton Vineyard's current estate vintage is 2011. It was a cool vintage and was picked very late (October 24). It boasts medium dark ruby color and displays a lovely nose of red cherry. The wine is gorgeous on the palate, velvet smooth, elegant and refined with a ripe cherry finish. **Easton 2011 Easton Zinfandel Rinaldi Vineyard Old Vines Fiddletown (\$25) 93**

The Zinfandel Rinaldi Vineyard is semi opaque with a dark ruby robe. Aged in French oak, 25% new, it reveals dark cherry aromas with a touch of tobacco. On the palate it is beautifully balanced with good acidity

and freshness and rich extract on the finish. **Easton 2000 Zinfandel Estate Shenandoah Valley (\$35) 94** The 2000 Zinfandel Estate is remarkably fresh and lively for its age. Dark ruby red, it exhibits savory aromas on the nose with hints of tobacco and a touch of soy. It has good mid-palate intensity and a superb finish.

Edmeades (Mendocino) This winery crafts lusty mountain hillside Zinfandels from cool-climate vineyards situated in the Mendocino Ridge AVA. The winery was founded in the early 1960s by Dr. Donald Edmeades, a Pasadena cardiologist. It was purchased in 1988 by Kendall Jackson, which recruited Ben Salazar as winemaker. (See box on Edmeades in the Mendocino County regional review). www.edmeades.com

Edmeades 2013 Zinfandel Mendocino County (\$20) 90 This Zinfandel offers aromas of red and black fruit and dried herbs with hints of balsamic and tobacco. It is big on the palate with good structure, firm tannins and a long finish.

Edmeades 2013 Zinfandel Gianoli Vineyard Mendocino Ridge (\$35) 94

The 2013 Zinfandel Gianoli Vineyard exhibits a tart cherry nose and silky attack of incredible purity and depth. It has fresh red fruit flavors, elegant mouth feel and a long finish. **Edmeades 2013 Zinfandel Perli Vineyards I Mendocino Ridge (\$31) 93**

This high elevation site displays earthy, balsamic, creosote-like notes on the nose. It is broad and full on the palate and, firmly structured with good mid-palate richness, and excellent structure on the finish.



Elyse Winery (Napa Valley) Elyse's founding winemaker/owner, Ray Coursen, grew up in a rural dairy farm community in northwest New Jersey and later served in Vietnam. In the early 1980s, having

developed an interest in wine, he and his wife Nancy moved from Massachusetts to Napa Valley where they launched their winemaking ventures. Ray has made some magnificent wines over the years specializing in Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Syrah, Syrah and Zinfandel. These three Zinfandels are examples of Ray's fine winemaking. www.elysewinery.com

Elyse 2013 Zinfandel Morisoli Vineyard Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$40) 91 The Zinfandel Morisoli Vineyard is a blend of 88% Zinfandel and small quantities of seven other grapes. It is a vibrant wine revealing aromas and flavors of raspberry and plum with notes of garrigue. Aged 10 months in American oak, 25% new, it is lush on the palate with a soft velvet texture, soft round tannins, and a long finish. **Elyse 2013 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$37) 91** This is a delightful wine offering notes of spice and garrigue with rich red and black fruit. It is beautiful on the attack and quite lush with good palate intensity, rich flavors, nicely integrated oak, and a persistent finish. **Elyse 2012 Zinfandel Korte Ranch Vineyard St. Helena, Napa Valley**

(\$36) 90 The 2012 Zinfandel Korte Ranch Vineyard is sourced from two 75 year-old vineyard blocks. The wine has a distinctly earthy character offering hints of tobacco, loam and plum. A combination of Zinfandel and black grapes gives this wine layers of flavor with a soft lush texture on the palate.

Enkidu Wine 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Sonoma County

(\$25) 90 This old vine Zinfandel is sourced from vineyards as old as 125 years. Opaque-colored, it is bold flavored and concentrated with black cherry and blackberry fruit. It offers a full ripe-tasting mouth feel, excellent balance and a long rich spicy after-taste.



Fields Family Wines

(Lodi) Field Family Wines are handcrafted by owners Russ and Melinda Field in partnership with Ryan and Jalynn Sherman. The Fields purchased the estate in 2005 and constructed their winery and main house. The wines are made by Ryan Sherman, a talented self-taught

winemaker. www.fieldsfamilywines.com

Fields Family Wines 2014 Zinfandel Stampede Vineyard

Lodi 91 First released in 2013, this is a lovely wine offering red cherry and berry fruit and floral perfume with a touch of black raspberry. It reveals remarkable purity and depth on the palate with vibrant acidity. A high toned attractive Zinfandel.



Francis Ford Coppola

(Dry Creek Valley) This large winery, owned by famed movie director Francis Ford Coppola, produces fairly priced and good quality wines. The wines are categorized under three different collections.

The wines, including these three Zinfandels, are made under the direction of the talented winemaker Corey Beck, who is making European-styled wines that are fruit forward and elegant with good flavor concentration, relatively low alcohol levels and good overall balance. www.francisfordcoppolawinery.com

Francis Coppola 2014 Diamond Collection Zinfandel

California (\$15) 88 The Diamond Collection Zinfandel is a blend of 75% Zinfandel and 25% Petite Sirah sourced from vineyards in Paso Robles and Sonoma County. It exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of pure dark plum. On the palate it offers more plum, noteworthy silky tannins and a pleasant finish. Excellent value. **Francis Coppola 2013**

Director's Cut Dry Creek Valley (\$27) 88 The Director's Cut has a dark ruby color and offers a very soft spicy attack of black cherry and plum. It is unusually soft on the palate with modest tannic structure, medium acidity, and

a short finish. **Francis Coppola 2013 Director's Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$21) 90** A step up in richness from the Diamond Collection, the Director's Zinfandel offers fragrant blackberry and plum fruit on the nose. On the palate it delivers spicy black and red fruit flavors and hints of chocolate with Francis Coppola's tell-tale soft texture, concentrated fruitiness and perfect balance.



Gary Farrell Winery (Russian River Valley) The Gary Farrell Winery is best known for producing distinctive vineyard-designated Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. However, it also produces outstanding vineyard-designated Zinfandels. The two

wines reviewed here are bold flavored and elegant. Winemaking is in the capable hands of the talented Theresa Heredia, who joined Gary Farrell in 2012. www.garyfarrellwinery.com

Gary Farrell 2014 Zinfandel Grist Vineyard Dry Creek Valley (\$50) 92

The Zinfandel Grist Vineyard displays a dark red, transparent color. Offering fresh, pure black currant and dark red fruit, it has a silky mouth feel and is packed with red and black berries, spice and black pepper. There are firm but round tannins on the palate with a bit of heat on the finish. Drinkable now but will be even better in a couple of years and should age well over the next seven to ten years. **Gary Farrell 2014 Zinfandel Maffei Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$50) 92+** The Zinfandel Maffei Vineyard offers bold and concentrated red and black fruit flavors with notes of black pepper and spice. It displays firm round tannins, good acidity and a persistent finish. It has slightly bigger shoulders than the Zinfandel Grist Vineyard without losing freshness or elegance. A superb wine with great aging potential.

Gehricke 2014 Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$30) 91

This offering is a blend of 81% Zinfandel and 19% Petite Sirah. It is endowed with rich flavors of spicy black cherry and plum. Aged 18 months in French oak, it is beautifully structured with good intensity of flavor, a softly textured palate and round tannins. It has a nice long, fruit-rich finish with a hint of toast. Sourced from old vines of the Ponzo Vineyard.



Green & Red Vineyards

(Napa Valley), named for its red iron soils veined with green serpentine, this estate is located in the steep hills on the east side of Napa Valley. The planting was started in 1972 on land originally in vineyards in the 1890's. 31 acres of vineyard are planted

within a 200 acre parcel, and all Green and Red wines are made from estate vineyards. Three separate mountain vineyards, Chiles Mill, Tip Top and Catacula are located at different elevations ranging from 900 to 2000 feet and have different exposures. Yields average 2-3 tons per acre. Jay Heminway is the owner and veteran winemaker and performs magic in these hills. www.greenandred.com

Green and Red 2014 Zinfandel Chiles Mill Vineyard Napa Valley (\$30) 92

This Zinfandel is endowed with fragrant, spicy red berry fruit and a super elegant mouth feel. It is beautifully balanced and nicely structured, revealing firm chalky tannins and a long finish.

Green and Red 2014 Zinfandel Tip Top Vineyard Napa Valley (\$30) 94

The Zinfandel Tip Top Vineyard is the more elegant and refined bottling, sourced at a mountain vineyard grown at 1700 feet above the Pacific. Pinot-Noir like in character, it reveals pure dark red cherry and raspberry fruit and is both vibrant and feminine with remarkable acidity and freshness.



Grigich Hills (Napa Valley)

This iconic estate in Napa Valley was established by Mike Grigich whose original home of Croatia is the same as that of the Zinfandel grape. The winery has been producing Zinfandel since the very first years of operation in the mid-1970s. Its Zinfandel was sourced from dry-farmed,

hillside vineyards in Alexander Valley in the early days. The quality of the estate Zinfandel has been good over the years, but the Miljenko "Mike" has been far superior. www.grgich.com

Grigich Hills 2012 Estate Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$36) 88

This release boasts a medium ruby color and juicy dark blackberry fruit flavors. Seamlessly integrated, the wine is co-fermented with Peitit Sirah, and aged 15 months in large oak casks. The wine is easy drinking, albeit earthy, and has a long pleasant finish.

Grigich Hills 2012 Miljenko's Old Vine Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$125) 91

The Zinfandel vines for this wine were planted 129 years ago in the Grigich Hills Estate Vineyard in Calistoga. A bold and vibrant wine, it is endowed with raspberry and blackberry fruit with hints of clove and black pepper. The flavors are nicely concentrated and the tannins soft and round with a pleasant texture.



Harney Lane Winery (Lodi)

Harney Lane Winery was only established in 2006, although the owners, the George Mettle Family, have a rich history of farming in Lodi since 1907.

The winery sources its grapes from vineyards on its 100-acre estate east of Lodi. Zinfandel is one of its specialties and the Lizzy James Vineyard, planted in 1904, is their "pride and joy". www.harneylane.com

Harney Lane Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Lizzy James Vineyard Lodi (\$36) 91

This is a ripe wine with a soft texture and integrated flavors of brambly black cherry and a hint of tobacco. Full-bodied and aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, it displays good density of flavor, round tannins, and a long finish. Harney Lane Winery 2013 Zinfandel Lodi (\$24) 89 A blend of 95% Zinfandel and 5% Petit Sirah, this is an easy drinking wine soft on the attack with sweet briary black raspberry fruit, brown spices and leather notes. Aged 18 months in American oak, it finishes with spicy and peppery balsamic notes.

Harney Lane Winery Zinfandel Scottsdale Vineyard Lodi (\$34) 90

The 2014 Zinfandel Scottsdale is sourced from a 2.5 acre east side parcel of old vines acquired by the family in 2014. Aged 18 months in neutral oak, it offers sweet fruit, brown spice, and a tobacco note. It is big and concentrated on the palate with excellent balance and structure, firm, and finishing with sweet balsamic notes.



Hartford Family Winery (Russian River Valley)

Founded in 1994 by owners Don and Jenny Hartford, Hartford Family Wines released their inaugural vintage in 1996. Located in the Sonoma County town of Forestville, the winery spans 21 vineyards located in some of the coolest areas of the Russian River Valley, Green Valley, Sonoma Valley, Anderson Valley, and Los Carneros appellations. Long time winemaker Jeff Stewart, a UC Davis graduate with a degree in fermentation science, viticulture, and enology, has been making old vine Zinfandel in the Russian River Valley and Sonoma County for over 25 years. These Zinfandels are among finest and most polished wines produced in Sonoma County. www.hartfordwines.com

Hartford Family Winery 2015 Zinfandel Old Vine Russian River Valley (\$40) 93

The 2015 Zinfandel Old Vine is somewhat more complex than the 2014 vintage. While fragrant and offering aromas of fresh black cherry and blackberry, it also reveals notes of black pepper, briar

and chocolate. Elegant and high toned, it is also nicely balanced and vibrant. **Hartford Family Winery 2014 Zinfandel Old Vine Russian River Valley (\$40) 92** This Zinfandel Old Vine is a blend of several old vineyards including Dina's, Fanucchi-Wood Rd, Highwire, Jolene, and the Hartford. It is very aromatic offering black cherry, blackberry and spicy vanilla on the nose. On the palate it is beautifully balanced and reveals good mid-palate richness and a pleasant finish. **Hartford Family Winery 2014 Zinfandel Old Vine Highwire Russian River Valley (\$60) 94** This is a gorgeous wine on all counts. It displays an opaque ruby color and rich aromas and flavors of black cherry, boysenberry and cassis. Aged in French oak, 46% new, it is soft and lush on the palate, offers savory and meaty nuances on the mid-palate, and finishes with a silky purity. **Hartford Family Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Fannuchi-Woodrod Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$60) 95** This is a wine of great character and complexity. It is rich and juicy on the palate, offering loads of ripe and spicy black cherry fruit but not over the top. Aged in French oak, 30% new, it displays perfect balance and refinement with nuances of briar, earth, and black pepper. An extraordinary wine. **Hartford Family Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Jolene's Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$60) 91** The Old Vine Zinfandel Jolene's Vineyard offer aromas of blackberry and black cherry fruit. It is medium weight with good density of dark fruit flavors and a soft texture. It is not as lush and rich tasting as the other wines in this line up, but it has a very pleasant mouth feel and a refined finish.

HENDRY



Hendry Winery (Napa Valley) is a small, family-owned

ranch located in Southern Napa Valley. The 200-acre property was purchased by George and Margaret Hendry in 1939. Their son, George Hendry, planted the property entirely to wine grapes in the early 1970's and established a reputation for growing quality grapes. The vineyard is divided into 49 different blocks, each representing a unique combination of soil type, vine vigor, microclimate, rootstock, clone and varietal. In 1992, George Hendry produced his first wines under the Hendry label, which today total 11 different varieties and more than a dozen wines, including three excellent Zinfandels. www.hendrywines.com

Hendry Vineyard 2014 Primitivo Block 24 Napa Valley (\$35) 93 This Primitivo displays a medium dark ruby purple. This offering displays ripe raspberry and black cherry on the nose with hints of licorice. It has a refined silky mouth feel and pure red and black fruit extract on the palate. It is nicely balanced with fine tannins and a long finish. Super. **Hendry Vineyard 2014 Zinfandel Block 28 Napa Valley (\$35) 92** Henry's Block 28 offers aromas of raspberry and a brown spice note on nose. It is silky on the attack with good purity of fruit with spice and underbrush notes. It is a delicious wine with a persistent finish. **Hendry Vineyard 2014 Zinfandel Blocks 7 & 22**

Napa Valley (\$35) 90+ This is an attractive offering from Hendry Vineyard. Dark ruby in color, it is an earthy spicy Zinfandel with red and black fruit flavors, Aged 15 months in French oak, it is medium-bodied, with excellent structure and is long-lasting on the palate. The vines in both blocks were planted to clone 2 on trellises. Block 7 was planted in 1975 and Block 22 in 1995.

Howell Mountain Vineyards 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Howell Mountain Napa Valley (\$45) 90+ The 2014 Howell Mountain Zinfandel displays a dark ruby color and aromas of dark cherry and plum with scents of brown spice. Fruit forward with a touch of underbrush, it is soft and delicate on the palate with good acidity and has a long finish. Elegant but less complex than some.



Iron Hub Winery (Amador County) Tom and Beth Jones are the owners of Iron Hub Winery (formerly known as Amador Foothill Winery) located in the Shenandoah Valley on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada. They launched the Iron Hub label in 2016 featuring premium estate-bottled varietals and blends that include

three Zinfandels. Tom serves as winemaker, having graduated from UC Davis in the 1980s with a BS in Geology and Master of Science degree in Enology and Viticulture. www.ironhubwines.com

Iron Hub 2013 Clock Spring Zinfandel Amador County (\$28) 88 The Clock Spring Zinfandel reveals a medium light ruby color and moderate red raspberry aromas. It has a silky palate although it is light on fruit flavors. Aged 24 months in French oak, it has a rather dry finish. **Iron Hub 2013 Esola Amador County (\$32) 90** The 2013 Esola Zinfandel is an attractive fruit forward wine offering black cherry and plum flavors on the palate with hints of sweet oak, vanilla and caramel. It has a silky texture, round tannins, and a juicy finish.



Ironstone Vineyards (Lodi) In 1948 John Kautz began growing wine grapes on 12 acres in Lodi. In 1988 John and his wife Gail began making wine as well as continuing to sell their grapes. All of

their Zinfandels are old vine. Steve Millier is the Vice President and Director of Winemaking and has been involved in the wine industry for over 30 years. The winery gets its name from its limestone and schist rocky soils. www.ironstonevineyards.com

Ironstone Vineyards 2015 Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$12) 88 This is an inviting entry-level Zinfandel offering aromas of plum and sweet vanilla. It is soft on the palate and

easy drinking, with a lush mouth feel, round tannins and a moderately long finish. **Ironstone Vineyards 2014 Reserve Lodi (\$35) 91** Amazingly complex on the nose, very refined and interesting to dwell over. Showing good density of dark plum and raspberry flavor and a full-bodied, elegant palate, this is a beautifully balanced wine. **Ironstone Vineyards 2014 Reserve Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$28) 89** This wine is fruit forward, offering aromas of blackberry and plum. It is soft on the palate and medium-bodied with light fruit flavors and oak nuances. It is well-balanced with firm round tannins and a long finish.



J Dusi Wines (Paso Robles) Janell Dusi is making wine from her family's 80 year old, head trained, dry farmed Zinfandel vineyard. The Dusi Vineyard was planted by her Italian immigrant grandparents. Janell makes old vine Zinfandel and Carignane from the Dusi Vineyard and makes Pinot Gris and Syrah from other vineyards. The wines

we tasted are notable for their balance, fresh, easy drinking quality. www.jdusiwines.com

J Dusi Wines 2013 Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$38) 91+ The 2013 Zinfandel offers ripe and dense cranberry fruit on the nose and the palate. It is a vibrant and delicious wine that is aging gracefully with firm round tannins, good acidity and a persistent finish. **J Dusi Wines 2014 Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$38) 91** Spicy red berries and black currants are offered on the nose of this J Dusi 2014 Zinfandel. On the palate it reveals dense and briary boysenberry fruit with earthy nuances. It is full in the mouth with good balance, medium weight and has good acidity on the finish. **J Dusi Wines 2015 Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$38) 92** The 2015 J Dusi Zinfandel is a step up in quality from the 2014 vintage. It is more aromatic than the 2014 and is soft and lush on the palate with spicy dense boysenberry and black currant fruit with a hint of slate. It is nicely balanced with good density on the mid-palate and reveals soft round tannins on the finish. **J Dusi 2013 Fiorentino Paso Robles (\$42) 92+** The 2013 Fiorentino is a lovely blend of Zinfandel, Petit Sirah and Carignane. Fruit forward and lush on the palate, it is seamless and perfectly balanced with a dense flavor profile of dark red and black fruit and a long finish.

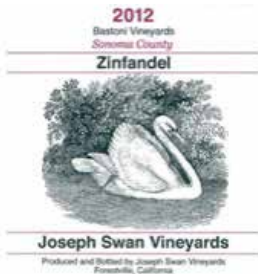


Jeff Cohn Cellars (Alameda), established in 1996, is a premier, urban-based winery located in historic Jack London Square in Oakland. Jeff specializes in producing small lots of single vineyard designate Zinfandels as well as Rhone inspired red and white blends. His fruit is sourced from many of the oldest and most historic vineyards. Jeff Cohn has a passion for creating single vineyard Zinfandels that showcase the vineyards, the growers and his winemaking style. Jeff Cohn Cellars produces Zinfandels of amazing quality and diversity. www.jeffcohncellars.com

Jeff Cohn Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Cassata Vineyard Sonoma Valley (\$42) 90 The Zinfandel Cassata Vineyard displays an opaque purple red color with rich blackberry, cassis and cherry on the nose. It is soft and full on the palate with firm dry tannins on the finish. **Jeff Cohn Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Ocio Sonoma Valley (\$50) 91** Dark ruby in color, the Ocio, also sourced from the Cassata Vineyard, offers flavors of ripe blackberry, blueberry, earth, and toasted oak. It is nicely concentrated with dark plum flavors. The palate reveals round firm tannins and a long finish. **Jeff Cohn Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Iron Hill (\$38) 90** The 2014 Zinfandel Iron Hill is a lovely wine rich in fruit extract and flavor. It offers aromas of blackberry and plum with notes of earth and minerals. Aged 16 months in 30% new French oak, it is seamless on the palate providing beautiful fruit flavors, ripe tannins and a long finish. **Jeff Cohn Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Isabel Sweetwater Springs Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$38) 93** Opaque ruby in color, this Zinfandel is endowed with bold black currant aromas on the nose and a soft attack of ripe and savory black fruit on the palate. A big-shouldered wine, it is dense and packed with fruit and tannin that require a couple of years of bottle aging for maximum drinking pleasure. **Jeff Cohn Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Nun's Canyon Moon Mountain (\$42) 92** With a nose of red and black fruit, the Nun's Canyon Vineyard displays spicy, jammy red raspberry with hints of cedar and anise. It is silky smooth on the attack with lovely balance and acidity and a long finish. **Jeff Cohn Cellars 2014 Zinfandel St. Peters Church Alexander Valley (\$42) 93** Dark red garnet in color, this Zinfandel offers a clean bouquet of black raspberry and a touch of truffle and earth. It reveals a lovely refined attack and palate feel and is polished and balanced with a rich finish.

Jelly Jar Wines (Lake County) The husband and wife team of Andy and Shannon Pestoni has been producing Jelly Jar wines since 2005. Family roots in Napa Valley date back to the late 1890s. The family estate vineyard is situated at an elevation of 2129 feet in the Lake County AVA and is planted from old California Zinfandel clones, including the DuPratt and Deaver clones, on St. George rootstock. www.jellyjar.com

Jelly Jar 2014 Zinfandel Lake County (\$22) 89 This Lake County Zinfandel is pleasant drinking. It offers bright raspberry and plum flavors on a light-bodied palate with briary notes. Aged 10 months in 30% new French oak, it reveals a lovely soft texture with good acidity and is easy-drinking through to the finish. The grapes are sourced from the family's estate vineyard.



Joseph Swan Vineyards (Russian River Valley) Joseph Swan is one of the most celebrated winemakers in California wine history. Passionate about Zinfandel, he purchased a run-down Zinfandel vineyard and built a modest winery in the Russian River Valley in the late 1960s, releasing his first Zinfandel

in 1969. His Zinfandels were highly regarded, if not somewhat controversial. When Joe Swan passed away in 1992, his daughter Lynn and son-in-law Bob Berglund took over management of the winery. www.swanwinery.com

Joseph Swan Vineyards 2012 Zinfandel Bastoni Vineyard Fountain Grove (\$30) 90 Medium-dark ruby. Easy drinking and rather soft on the attack with red berry fruit aromas and flavors. Nicely balanced for every day drinking, showing good acidity and freshness. **Joseph Swan**

Vineyards 2012 Zinfandel Mancini Ranch Russian River Valley (\$34) 88 The Zinfandel Mancini Ranch displays a beautiful medium-red color and offers aromas of red berries, pomegranate and rose petals. Light on the attack and palate, it is closer in style to an Italian Rosso than to a Zinfandel with its dry and brambly red berry finish. **Joseph Swan Vineyards 2012 Zinfandel Zeigler Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$34) 90** The Zinfandel Zeigler Vineyard is similar in character to the Mancini Ranch. It has light red berry fruit on the nose and a soft velvet palate and good flavor density. The finish shows rich extract and bright scents of raspberry and red cherry.

Joseph Swan Vineyards 2013 Zinfandel Vine Hill School Road (VHSR Redux) Russian River Valley (\$35) 87+ This is a fruit forward and aromatic wine with a pleasant cherry nose. It is medium weight, light-bodied, and flavorful with a hint of licorice. It is nicely structured with a firm finish.

Kendall Jackson 2014 Zinfandel Vintner's Reserve (\$14) 90+ This is a lovely red-fruited Zinfandel with a fresh aroma, rich red berry flavors and a silky mouth feel. With excellent balance on the palate, it is a pleasant and well-priced Zinfandel.



Klinker-Brick (Lodi) Old Vine Zinfandel is one of the specialties of this family-owned and operated Lodi winery founded in the early 1900s. The Felton Family owns 15 vineyard blocks of old vine Zinfandel in the Mokelumne River and Clements Hills sub-AVAs, ranging in age from 40 to 120 years old. The Feltons sold their Zinfandel in bulk to other producers in Napa and Sonoma counties until 2000 when they produced their first vintage of Old Vine Zinfandel. Barry Gnekow, a UC Davis graduate, has been serving as winemaker since the inaugural vintage. Klinker-Brick wines are robust, spicy and well-balanced.

Klinker Brick Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$19) 90+ The Klinker Brick Old Vine Zinfandel is endowed with ripe briary red and blackberry fruit with a hint of black pepper. On the palate, it reveals lush dark fruit flavors with good acidity, firm round tannins and a long finish. A blend of 16 different vineyard blocks of old vine Zinfandel with an average age of 86 years. Aged in American oak for 15 months. Good value. **Klinker Brick Winery 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Marisa Vineyard Lodi (\$30) 91** Sourced from a single block of the 89 year old Marisa Vineyard, this offering reveals youthful, exuberant fruitiness on the nose and the palate. It displays ripe red berries with dark fruit flavors and a hint of American toasted oak and spices. A lovely mouth-filling wine with round tannins and a long finish. **Klinker Brick Winery 2014 Old Ghost Old Vine Zinfandel (\$37) 93** The Old Ghost Old Vine Zinfandel is the strongest wine of this trio. It is endowed with ripe and delicious brambly fruit on the nose and has good depth of red and black fruit flavors on the palate with hints of baking spices. Aged 18 months in French and American oak, it has round firm tannins and a persistent finish. Beautifully balanced.



Kunde (Sonoma County) The Kunde Family Winery has been in operation since the end of the 19th century. The family estate consists

of 1850 acres, 750 of which are sustainably farmed vineyards. The winery is run today by Jeff Kunde with wine making under the direction of Zach Long. Kunde produces 70,000 cases annually of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and two very fine Zinfandels, especially the Zinfandel Reserve Century Vines. www.kunde.com

Kunde 2014 Zinfandel Reserve Century Vines Sonoma Valley (\$50) 94 The Zinfandel Reserve Century Vines is sourced from 135 year old head-trained vines. Opaque ruby in color, it offers aromas of black cherry and raspberry followed by a silky texture, firm round tannins

and a very long spicy finish. A polished wine with intense flavor that comes from a well-managed vineyard and top wine making. **Kunde 2014 Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Sonoma Valley (\$22) 89** Medium ruby in color, this Zinfandel is light-bodied but fruity and offers aromas and flavors of pomegranate with hints of earth and cedar. It also displays a soft texture, medium acidity and a pleasant finish.



LangeTwins (Lodi) The Lange twins have been farmers in Lodi for five generations. In 2006, brothers Brad and Randall built a winery. Their estate vineyards, River Ranch and DeVries

Road Ranch, are certified sustainable. They also purchase fruit from neighboring vineyards. Winemakers are David Akiyoshi and Karen Birmingham. They make traditional wines that can be enjoyed with food and would be recognized by the Lange Twins' grandfather. They produce a wide variety of wines (twenty-three varieties) including two fine Zinfandels. They produce another tasty Zinfandel under the Caricature label. Great values. www.langetwins.com

LangeTwins Family 2014 Estate Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$15) 90 Gorgeous wine. Very refined aromas and flavors of blackberry and raspberry. Soft texture, good intensity of fruit, and perfectly balanced with hints of toast and a persistent finish. **LangeTwins 2011 Centennial Zinfandel Lodi (\$60) 91+** The 2011 Centennial Zinfandel is a silky smooth rich tasting offering from the LangeTwins Winery. Virtually opaque in color, it displays spicy black cherry fruit on the palate with excellent balance, soft round tannins and a long finish. Sourced from old growth vines of the historic Lewis Family Vineyard planted in 1903. This is a highly polished wine that will grab your attention. An exemplary Lodi wine. **LangeTwins Winery 2013 Caricature Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$15) 89** The Caricature displays jammy red berry fruit and spice on the nose, It is ripe, soft and round on the palate with good acidity, freshness and loads of sweet vanilla oak on the mid-palate and finish. Great value.



LIMERICK LANE

Limerick Lane (Russian River Valley) This family-owned winery produces some of Russian River Valley's finest old-vine Zinfandels from a 30-acre estate vineyard first planted in 1910. Located in a small, enclosed microclimate just south of Healdsburg, the property consists of very special old-vine mixed black blends of Zinfandel and Syrah. The current owners, brothers Jake and Scott Bilbro, acquired it in 2011. The previous owners, brothers Michael and Tom Collins, oversaw the planting of twenty-five acres of Zinfandel, Syrah and Grenache. In addition to making outstanding Zinfandel themselves, the Bilbros sell fruit to Bedrock and Carlisle. www.limericklanewines.com

Limerick Lane Cellars 2014 Estate Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$42) 93 The Estate Zinfandel embodies lovely aromas of boysenberry and black cherry. It is medium-weight and perfectly balanced with a silky palate and nice density of red berry fruit flavors. A rich and refined wine, it reveals soft round tannins and a long finish. **Limerick Lane Cellars 2014 1910 Block Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$54) 94** The 1910 Block Zinfandel exhibits a dark ruby purple color. It offers a gorgeous nose of pure plum with nuances of black cherry and boysenberry. On the palate it offers spicy fruit flavors with good density, beautiful balance and a lovely long finish. Superb. **Limerick Lane Cellars Rocky Knoll Russian River Valley (\$58) 93** The Rocky Knoll Zinfandel is a gusty tannic field blend offering dark cherry flavors with scents of thyme and rosemary and hints of graphite and blackberry. Sourced from a 2.5 acre block on the estate, consisting of Zinfandel, Petite Syrah, Mourvedre, Carignane and Syrah, it is beautifully balanced with outstanding concentration and a long finish.

Louis M Martini 2013 Gnarly Vine Zinfandel Monte Rosso Vineyard Sonoma Valley (\$60) 95 The 2013 Gnarly Vine Zinfandel Monte Rosso Vineyard is a sensational wine. At 16.2 alcohol, it is a massive rich and concentrated Zinfandel. Opaque purple in color, it boasts briary black cherry fruit flavors with chocolate and toasted oak nuances. Seamlessly integrated, it combines bold and layered fruit flavors, a rich and velvet smooth mouth feel, and a long finish.



m2 wines (Lodi) is an artisanal winery that sources grapes from Lodi's special, old vineyards. Layne Montgomery is owner and also the talented winemaker at m2. His new, stylish winery is in Acampo, and his wines are available for purchase there. Layne makes a Lodi Native Zinfandel from the Soucie Vineyard. www.m2wines.com

m2 wines 2014 Zinfandel Soucie Vineyard Select Block Lodi (\$59) 92 The Select Block Soucie Vineyard offers a

medium ruby color and is endowed with dark red cherry, pomegranate and plum aromas with scents of loam. Aged 19 months in 65% new French oak, it is perfectly integrated with a silky mouth feel, pure fruit flavor, hints of spices and a pleasant finish. Very fine drinking here. Sourced from one of Lodi's finest old vineyards. **m2 wines 2014 Zinfandel Soucie Vineyard Select Block 1916 Lodi (\$30) 91** The Soucie Vineyard Select Block 1916 is a delicious wine but not as rich and densely flavored as the Soucie Vineyard Select Block. It has some semblance, however, with its cherry and plum aromas and purity of flavor, albeit revealing more earthy balsamic notes that are commonly found in Lodi wines. **m2 wines 2014 Zinfandel emtwopointone Lodi (\$22) 90** The emtwopointone is a pleasant easy-drinking wine with a silky elegant mouth feel and flavors of dark cherries and raspberries. It is firm on the mid-palate and slightly herbal with a lovely finish. Aged 14 months in 10% new American, 90% neutral barrels.



Martinelli (Russian River Valley) The Martinellis have been growing grapes (and apples) in Russian River since the 1880s when Giuseppe and Luisa Martinelli settled in Sonoma and planted

the famous Jackass Hill Vineyard to Zinfandel. Their vineyards consist of 158 acres of vines, primarily planted with Chardonnay and smaller amounts of Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and other varieties. Although they produce their own wine, some 90% of Martinelli grapes are sold to other Sonoma County wineries. The Martinelli Zinfandels reviewed here are high quality. They're made with natural yeast and are unfiltered and unfiltered. While relatively high in alcohol, they are well balanced and delicious. The estate is managed by Lee Sr. and his sons and daughters. Bryan Kvamme serves as winemaker and Erin Green as consulting winemaker. www.martinelliwinery.com

Martinelli 2014 Vigneto di Evo Russian River Valley (\$30) 91 The Vigneto di Evo brings together grapes from various Martinelli vineyards. It offers aromas of cassis and red raspberry with hints of cedar and a chocolate dusting on the nose. Aged in 75% new French oak, it reveals a silky attack with a lovely texture, fine tannins, and good acidity through to the finish. **Martinelli 2015 Lolita Ranch Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$58) 93** The Zinfandel Lolita Ranch is a compelling wine. Medium dark ruby in the glass, it offers elegant red pomegranate and dark cherry fruit on the nose with a light cola note. On the palate it reveals excellent depth of flavor with dried red and savory dark fruit flavors. It is very high in alcohol (16.7) but handles it well. The budwood for Lolita Ranch came from Jackass Hill. **Martinelli 2015 Giuseppe & Luisa Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$58) 92** Dark ruby garnet in color, the Giuseppe & Luis Zinfandel displays a spicy plum and cassis nose with hints of cracked pepper. It also reveals excellent purity on

the palate with a touch of tobacco leaf and loam. A little darker fruited than the Vellutini Ranch, it come across soft and feminine with a persistent finish. 16.4 alc. **Martinelli 2015 Zinfandel Vellutini Ranch (\$58) 93** This Zinfandel displays a medium dark ruby color and offers spicy floral dried red fruit on the nose. On the palate it has excellent depth of flavor and is beautifully focused with savory dark fruit. The wine has a massive 16.7 alc. level and handles it well. The budwood from Jackass Hill has also been used here. **Martinelli 2015 Zinfandel Jackass Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$95) 94** The grapes for this magnificent wine are sourced from an eight acre vineyard planted in the late 1800s and located just south of the Jackass Hill Vineyard. The aroma of this Zinfandel exhibits blue and dark red fruits with hints of earth and tobacco. It has very fine texture, almost delicate, and its 16.5% alcohol is perfectly integrated. **Martinelli 2015 Zinfandel Jackass Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$120) 95** The Zinfandel Jackass Hill Vineyard is crafted from a 100+ year-old legendary vineyard planted on one of Sonoma's steepest slopes. It is full-bodied with aromas of red berries and kirsch on the nose. On the palate it has a dense and somewhat gritty texture, and a huge rich finish. A fabulous wine.



Mauritsen Family Winery (Rockpile) Since the 1870's, the Mauritsen family has been growing grapes in the Dry Creek Valley, selling the fruit to many top wineries in Sonoma County. In the late 1990s they decided to make wine under the Mauritsen label, drawing upon 270 acres of vineyards.

Under the direction of the talented veteran winemaker, Clay Mauritsen, the winery produces single vineyard wines with the unique characteristics of each vineyard. The wines reviewed here are first class. www.mauritsenwines.com

Mauritsen Winery 2014 Zinfandel Rockpile Ridge Vineyard Rockpile Sonoma County (\$41) 93 This Zinfandel offering from the high altitude, Rockpile Ridge Vineyard displays a nose of red raspberry and blackberry with hints of sweet oak, minerals and earth. Aged 15 months in oak it is very complex and rich with layers of sweet oak and fruit. **Mauritsen Winery 2014 Zinfandel Cemetery Vineyard Rockpile Sonoma County (\$47) 90** The 2014 Zinfandel Cemetery Vineyard displays an opaque ruby color and an intriguing nose of ripe red and black fruit, oak and leather. Aged 18 months in French and American oak, it attributes a soft texture on the palate with slight weediness and dry tannins on the finish. **Mauritsen Winery 2014 Zinfandel Jack's Cabin Vineyard Rockpile Sonoma County (\$45) 92** The Zinfandel Jack's Cabin Vineyard is one of the premier vineyard sites in Rockpile, planted at nearly 950 feet in elevation. It displays an opaque ruby color and bold earthy flavors of red and black fruit on the palate. It is very well-balanced and elegant on the palate with a soft rich texture and a long dense finish. **Mauritsen Winery 2014 Zinfandel Westphall Ridge Vineyard Rockpile Sonoma**

County (\$45) 92 This 2014 Rockpile Zinfandel Westphall Ridge Vineyard is beautifully structured and offers flavors of ripe plum and cherry. Aged 11 months in French oak, it reveals good density of flavor, a velvet mouth feel, moderate acidity and a long pleasant finish. **Mauritson Winery 2015 Rockpile Zinfandel Rockpile Ridge Vineyard Rockpile 89** Savory dark fruit aromas. Soft and lush attack showing ripe blackberry with light tobacco notes. Quite distinct in style with a suave mouth feel and upfront dark fruit. Could use more structure. **Mauritson Winery 2015 Zinfandel Pritchett Peaks Vineyard Rockpile 92** Opaque ruby. Very spicy aromas of black pepper, Asian spice, and dark cherry. Full flavored with bright, fresh dark red fruit and a very long, richly flavored finish and firm tannins.



Mazzocco (Dry Creek Valley) Mazzocco is located in the rolling hills of Sonoma County in Dry Creek Valley. Founded in 1984, it was purchased by the Wilson family in 2005.

The winery is renown for its single vineyard-designate Zinfandels sourced from some of Sonoma County's finest vineyards. Stylistically, its wines are bold flavored, elegant and distinctive. The winemaker is Antoine Favero. Born in the Champagne region of France, Antoine was nine years old when he and his family relocated to Northern California wine country. "Bordeaux varietals are my passion," says Antoine "and Zinfandel is my obsession". www.mazzocco.com

Mazzocco 2014 Zinfandel Reserve Monte Rosso Vineyard Sonoma Valley (\$60) 92 Dark ruby. Lovely black cherry and raspberry aroma. Ripe with rich plum and black cherry flavors. Soft with sweet oak, spicy and a long finish. Very well done. **Mazzocco 2014 Zinfandel Reserve Rockpile Ranch Rockpile (\$60) 90** The 2014 Zinfandel Rockpile Ranch displays an opaque color yet is medium-weight and fruity with notes of earth and spice on the attack. Aged 18 months in French oak, it has a lovely soft texture, good acidity and balance and firm tannins. Not a complex wine but a delicious bold flavored one from a vineyard located 2000 ft high. **Mazzocco 2014 Zinfandel Reserve Serracino Dry Creek Valley (\$52) 92** This is a bold and very ripe offering with densely concentrated dark and spicy fruit flavors. It is a big wine with a lush mouth feel, soft round tannins, and a persistent finish. **Mazzocco 2014 Zinfandel Sullivan Dry Creek Valley (\$34) 93** The 2014 Zinfandel Sullivan is ripe and full flavored offering black cherry and baking spices, notably cardamon and cinnamon. It is soft and velvet smooth on the palate, has very good concentration and purity of flavors, and is integrated and balanced. Aged 18 months in used French oak. A superb wine. **Mazzocco 2014 Zinfandel Sullivan Reserve Sonoma County (\$52) 94** A step up in quality from the regular Sullivan, the Reserve is packed with dark fruit flavor, earthy nuances, and toasted oak. It is rich and concentrated with a silky mouth feel, firm round tannins and a persistent finish.



McCay Cellars (Lodi) is a boutique winery located on the north side of Lodi. Michael McCay has farmed in Lodi for 35 years and in 2007 launched McCay Cellars. His Lot 1 estate

vineyard was planted in 1915. He makes 9 different Zinfandels, including one from the TruLux vineyard and his Lodi Native Zinfandel. All are made with native yeast fermentation and all destemmed fruit. Annual production is about 2500 cases. One of the top producers in Lodi. www.mccaycellars.com

McCay Cellars 2013 TruLux Lodi (\$28) 90 The TruLux is a fruit rich 100% Zinfandel offering of black berries and boysenberries with a hint of pepper and dried tobacco. Beautifully balanced, it is soft on the attack and has a suave palate. The dark fruit and earthy character are exemplary of Lodi's west side vineyards. **McCay Cellars 2015 Bonotto Vineyard Lodi 91** Another vineyard located on the west side of Lodi, the Bonotto Vineyard was planted in the early 1940s, and its fruit was only sold to large wineries like E&J Gallo. The current owner, 4th generation Lodi grower Vince Bonotto, still cultivates the vineyard and agreed to sell fruit for the first time to Mike McCay to produce a wine from the 2014 vintage. The 2015 Bonotto Vineyard offers an inky, balsamic, forest floor nose. On the palate, the wine exhibits a meaty, soft, cola, forest floor character with hints of eucalyptus. There is richness and complexity here. **McCay Cellars 2013 Faith Lot 13 Vineyard Old Vine Lodi (\$28) 93** Medium dark red in color with aromas of cherry and blackberry with spicy hints of cinnamon. This wine offers notes of earth and of ripe balsamic on the palate with gentle tannins and a long finish. This estate vineyard was planted in 1920.



Michael David Winery (Lodi) Michael and David Philips are the brother-owners of Michael David Winery, one of the largest and most successful wineries in Lodi with sales close to one million cases annually, about half Zinfandel. The Michael David

winery sources fruit from 45 Zinfandel growers, and as of 2011 all Lodi fruit crushed at the winery was produced sustainably. It produces the highly popular "7 Deadly Zins" as well as numerous other Zinfandels from Lodi and other prime growing areas of California. The wines are of excellent quality and outstanding value. Kevin Phillips serves as winemaker. www.michaeldavidwinery.com

Michael David 2014 7 Deadly Zins Lodi (\$16) 89 The 7 Deadly Zins offers a wonderful introduction to Zinfandel at a highly affordable price. It boasts lovely dark cherry and raspberry aromas and flavors followed by an attack

of ripe fruit flavors. It is soft and round on the palate with excellent balance, good acidity and overall freshness.

Michael David 2014 Earthquake Zinfandel Lodi (\$26)

90 The Earthquake Zinfandel is endowed with ripe and flavorful dark berry fruit. It is soft and round on the palate with good intensity of flavor and rather lush tasting and velvety smooth. It boasts 15.5 alc. but you wouldn't know it, as the wine is perfectly balanced.

Michael David 2013 Lust Zinfandel Lodi (\$59) 90+ The 2013 Lust offers rich ripe dark red and black fruit with hints of loam, honeyed American oak and baking spices. Full-bodied and soft on the attack, it reveals good density of dark fruit flavors, spice and earthiness with firm dry tannins on the finish. **Michael David 2014 Gluttony Zinfandel Amador County (\$59) 93** The 2014 Gluttony is the top wine in this excellent collection. It offers spicy, briary black and red fruit. It has a velvety smooth palate and an elegant mouth feel with great balance, purity and length. It is endowed with lovely soft black cherry and plum flavors with a hint of backing spice and a long finish.

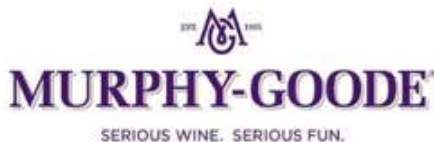


Miro Cellars (Dry Creek Valley) Miro Tcholakov, born and raised in Bulgaria, has been in the US since 1990, much of it spent working in the cellars of Sonoma County wineries. He began as an intern with Dry Creek Vineyard and later became Assistant Winemaker. In 1998 he became the winemaker

at Trentadue Winery, and in 2001 he launched his eponymous winery. His Zinfandels and other wines are fruit forward, bold and flavorful. www.mirocellars.com

Miro Cellars 2013 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$32) 91 The basic Zinfandel offers aromas of black cherry and black raspberry. It is bright and vibrant on the palate with nicely concentrated flavors, excellent balance and soft round tannins. Sourced from the benchlands of the northeastern part of Dry Creek Valley, an ideal growing site for Zinfandel. **Miro Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Old Vines Reserve**

Alegria Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$34) 90 The 2014 Zinfandel Old Vines Reserve displays aromas of licorice, blackberry and cranberry. On the palate it offers flavors of stewed blackberry fruit and spice with a soft round mouth feel, hints of earth and a long finish.



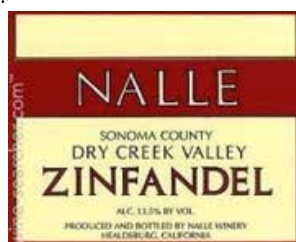
Murphy-Goode (Sonoma County) was established in 1985 by

Tim Murphy, Dale Goode and Dave Ready. This winery crafts high quality wines under the guidance of winemaker Dave Ready Jr. The winery became part of Jackson Family Wines in 2007. The two Zinfandels reviewed here are first-rate. www.murphygoodewinery.com

Murphy-Goode 2013 Liar's Dice Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$21) 91

Medium ruby. The 2013 Zinfandel Liar's Dice is endowed with red plum and blackberry fruit favors. It is perfectly balanced with good ripeness and acidity, Aged 16 months in American and French oak, it is both vibrant and juicy and has a long finish. **Murphy-Goode 2013 Snake Eyes Zinfandel Alexander Valley (\$35) 93**

This is a Zinfandel with fine breeding. Sourced from the Trusendi Vineyard in Alexander Valley, it is elegant and delicious with black cherry and black raspberry fruit with remarkable flavor intensity. Aged 14+ months in 84% French oak (22% new) and 16% American (6% new), it reveals spicy notes, firm round tannins and a long finish.



Nalle (Dry Creek Valley) is a small family winery in Dry Creek Valley owned and operated by veteran Zinfandel Master Doug Nalle, wife Lee and their son Andrew. The Nalle Winery was started by Doug in the mid-1980s and has been producing some of the finest

Zinfandels in Dry Creek Valley. Andrew Nalle, who studied Enology and Viticulture at Santa Rosa JC and UC Davis, currently serves as winemaker. Andrew is the fifth generation of his family in Dry Creek Valley. The Nalle Zinfandels reviewed here are flavorful, beautifully balanced and refined.

Nalle 2014 Estate Zinfandel Henderlong Ranch Dry Creek Valley (\$45) 90

The Nalle Estate Zinfandel exhibits pretty red cherry fruit on the nose. It is soft on the attack with bright fruit flavors and high acidity and is nicely balanced with good density and a long persistent finish. Sourced from 87 year old vines. Aged 18 months in neutral oak.

Nalle 2015 Estate Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$40) 91

This Nalle offering is stylistically similar to the 2014 bottling, but slightly better. It contains lovely fresh red berry and plum fruit. It reveals a soft attack and bright acidity on the palate with concentrated plum flavors. It has excellent balance, firm round tannins and a long finish. **Nalle 2014 Zinfandel Bernier-Sibary Dry Creek Valley (\$45) 92**

The Zinfandel Bernier-Sibary is a beautifully integrated wine, intriguing with red and blackberry fruit, good balance and acidity and a long finish. Aged 18 months in neutral French oak, it is perfectly elegant with a soft lengthy finish. A blend of 80% Zinfandel, 20% Petite Sirah and 10% Carignane sourced from the dry farmed 87 year old vines of the Henderlong Ranch.

Nimble Vineyards

Nimble Vineyards (Sonoma County) has 47 acres of estate vineyards planted to 6 varietals, including Zinfandel. After 15 years of growing and selling fruit, they recently started making their own wine and are off to a good start. www.nimblevineyards.com

Nimble Vineyards 2013 Nimble hog Red Blend Dry Creek Valley (\$30) 90 The 2013 Nimble hog is showing better than the 2014 at this stage. A blend of 53% Zinfandel, 30% Syrah, 8% Petite Sirah and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon, it displays aromas of red plum and black cherry and has a pleasant mouth feel with good density of dark fruit flavors. Aged 16 months in French oak, 27% new, it has round tannins and a long finish. Should drink well over the next five years. **Nimble Vineyards 2014 Nimble hog Red Blend Dry Creek Valley (\$30) 89** The 2014 Nimble hog is a blend of 89% Zinfandel, 9% Syrah, and 1% each of Petite Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. This blend displays briary flavors of red and black fruit and is slightly harsh on the palate with hard tannins. Aged 15 months in 33% new French oak barrels, the wines lack the balance and silky texture of the 2013 Nimble Zin. **Nimble Vineyards 2013 Nimble Zin Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$35) 91** The 2013 Nimble Zin is fruit forward offering aromas of black cherry, spice and toasted oak. It is beautifully balanced with concentrated red and blue fruit flavors, a silky texture, firm round tannins, and a long finish. Aged 14 months in 33% new French oak barrels.

ONCE &



FUTURE

Once and Future (Sonoma County) This is a new venture by veteran winemaker extraordinaire of Ravenswood, Joel Peterson. The goal is to produce small lots of high quality wine drawing upon the best of California's old vineyards and Peterson's 40+ years of winemaking experience. The two wines reviewed here are vintage Joel Peterson—first class. www.onceandfuturewine.com

Once and Future 2015 Bedrock Vineyard Zinfandel Sonoma Valley (\$65) 93 The 2015 Bedrock Vineyard Zinfandel is crafted from 127 year old vines. It is spicy and high toned with a lovely opaque color and ripe black cherry and plum fruit with scents of vanilla. It is dense and flavorful on the palate with firm tannins and a long finish. A wine that will improve with age and have a long savory life. **Once and Future 2015 Teldeschi Vineyard Frank's Block Dry Creek Valley (\$65) 93** The 2015 Teldeschi Vineyard Frank's block is sourced from 111 year-old vines. A blend of Zinfandel, Carignane, Alicante Bouschet, and some mixed blacks, it is co-fermented and aged in new oak. It offers dark and earthy black fruit flavors mixed with forest floor and briar. A bold and beautiful wine.

Opaque (Paso Robles) This label belongs to San Antonio Winery, the oldest and largest winery in Los Angeles, founded in 1917. The Riboli family, owners of the San Antonio Winery, recently established a new operation in the El Pomar district of Los Robles where Opaque is being produced. The San Antonio winery owns four vineyards in the El Pomar and Creston districts. Opaque has two Zinfandels in its portfolio that are reviewed here. www.riboliwines.com

Opaque 2014 Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$35) 89 This Zinfandel offers fragrant aromas of ripe black cherry and raspberry. It is fruit forward on the palate with good acidity and balance, soft round tannins and a long finish. Sourced from the Quarry Heights estate vineyard where head-trained vines grown on calcareous shale soils. Aged in American and French oak for 12 months. **Opaque 2014 Darkness Red Blend Paso Robles (\$30) 91** The 2014 Darkness is a blend of 60% Zinfandel, 12% Syrah, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon, and smaller amounts of Grenache, Petite Verdot and Petite Sirah grapes. It is more interesting than the regular Zinfandel and more complex with black raspberry and black cherry flavors, good structure and balance and firm round tannins on the finish.

Opolo Vineyards (Paso Robles) Rick Quinn and Dave Nichols are the owners of Opolo and the 280 acres of Opolo Vineyards in Paso Robles. They sell most of their grapes but began producing their own wines under the Opolo name in 1999. Their vineyards were planted from 1994-1996 on both the west (80 acres) and east sides (200 acres) of Paso Robles. The Mountain Zinfandel is crafted from vineyards located in the cool Santa Lucia Highlands.

Opolo Vineyards 2015 Mountain Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$29) 88 The 2015 Opolo Mountain Zinfandel is endowed with black cherry, plum and toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it reveals brawny fruit flavors and firm tannins. **Opolo Vineyards 2015 Summit Creek Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$19) 87** The 2015 Opolo Vineyards Summit Creek Zinfandel displays a light ruby color and reticent fruit aromas and flavors. It also reveals rather high acidity on the palate and a short finish. Hopefully this wine will fill out with time in the bottle.



Parmeson (Russian River Valley) is a small family winery that sources fruit from three local growers. Its Zinfandel comes from Bill Nachbauer's Alegria Vineyard in the Russian River Valley. They use a "hands off" approach in making wine. Tom Parmeson is the owner. The consulting winemakers are Clay Mauritson and Emma Kudritzki Hall. The winemaking team is shown here.

Parmeson Wines 2013 Zinfandel Alegria Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$35) 89 The 2013 Zinfandel from the Alegria Vineyard offers aromas of spicy cherries with hints of earth and savage. On the palate, it is beautifully balanced and flavorful, with soft round tannins and a pleasant medium-weight finish. **Parmeson Wines 2014 Zinfandel Alegria Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$35) 90+** The 2014 Parmeson Zinfandel Alegria Vineyard is more interesting. It offers aromas of spicy red berries with hints of earth on the nose. It has a tangy palate of plum fruit and underbrush, good concentration and a touch of oak.



Peachy Canyon (Paso Robles) is a family-owned winery located in Paso Robles. It was founded by Doug and Nancy Beckett in 1988 and has a well-deserved reputation for producing well-

balanced, terroir-based and food friendly wines, especially Zinfandels that reflect Paso's different micro climates. Try Mustard Creek Zinfandel and the Bordeaux blend, Para Siempre. The current winemaker is the talented veteran, Robert Henson.

Peachy Canyon Incredible Red Paso Robles Adelaida District (\$15) 88 The Incredible Red is a delicious fruit-forward plum-like wine with hints of spice. It exhibits good balance and acidity and is nicely concentrated with a strong backbone and finish. Good value. **Peachy Canyon Winery 2014 Bailey Paso Robles Adelaida District (\$38) 89** This offering provides lovely plum and black berry fruit. It is mouth filling with good flavor intensity, slightly herbal with a moderate finish. **Peachy Canyon Winery 2014 Zinfandel Clevenger Paso Robles (\$38) 89** The 2014 Zinfandel Clevenger offers ripe red berry aromas with a touch of sweet oak. On the palate it reveals fruity flavors of pomegranate and light red plum. It is nicely balanced with good acidity, round tannins and a firm finish. Grapes are sourced from the Willow Creek Vineyard. **Peachy Canyon Winery 2014 Mustang Spring Paso Robles (\$38) 88** Very fragrant cherries, this is a fruit forward, easy drinking wine. It lacks the structure and acidity for cellaring. **Peachy Canyon Winery 2014 Bailey Paso Robles Adelaida District 89** Another very pleasant, easy drinking Zinfandel. It shows good plum fruit, mouth filling with good flavor intensity, slightly herbal with a moderate finish. **Peachy Canyon Winery 2014 Vortex Paso Robles Adelaida District (\$38) 91** Very pleasant dark fruited Zinfandel. Soft on the attack with good density on the palate. Somewhat spicy with good acidity, overall freshness, and a solid finish. **Peachy Canyon Winery 2014 Zinfandel Especial Paso Robles Adelaida District (\$40) 90** The Especial is fruity forward with ripe black cherry and sweet toasted oak. On the palate it has a soft lush texture, concentrated peppery fruit flavors, round tannins and a long finish. **Peachy Canyon Winery 2014 Zinfandel Snow Paso Robles**

Adelaida District (\$38) 90 This is a medium ruby, light-bodied fruit forward and easy drinking Zinfandel. It offers red berry and pomegranate fruit flavors on the palate with good balance and acidity. It displays sweet toasted oak on the front end and on the finish with excellent mouth feel. Sourced from the single vineyard Snow Estate in the Adelaida District.



Peterson Winery (Dry Creek Valley) has been producing wine in Dry Creek Valley for over 25 years. Owner Fred Peterson and his son Fred craft the wines following a winemaking philosophy called "Zero Manipulation" which means using gentle, traditional winemaking practices to maximize flavors, aromatics and texture of the wines. They also practice sustainable farming in their

Bradford Mountain Vineyard and in their vineyard consulting practice. They have long-term relationships with quality growers in Dry Creek and Mendocino. Their Zinfandels are well made and reveal good depth of flavor and balance.

Peterson Winery 2013 Zinfandel Bernier Vineyard Dry Creek Valley (\$30) 89+ This Zinfandel offering has a spicy red fruited nose. It is full-bodied on the palate with a silky texture and dense fruit. It has nice tangy notes married to sweet fruit. Finishes dry with excellent extract. **Peterson Winery 2012 Zinfandel Bradford Mountain Estate Vineyard Dry Creek Valley (\$38) 90** This Zinfandel offers bold flavors of dark berry fruit and spice. It reveals good concentration and balance on the palate with lots of depth of flavor, firm round tannins and a persistent finish. The grapes for this Zinfandel are from Peterson's Bradford Mountain Estate situated at 1000 ft above Dry Creek Valley. **Peterson Winery 2013 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$25) 90** **Peterson Winery 2013 Zinfandel Tradizionale Dry Creek Valley (\$33) 91** The 2013 Zinfandel Tradizionale is the most compelling wine of the lineup. Sourced from a 90 year-old dry farmed traditional field blend, it displays aromas of black cherry and hints of dried herbs, tar, and earth. It reveals good freshness and acidity, mid-palate richness, firm round tannins and a long finish. Quite delicious.

Plungerhead 2014 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$18) 87 The Plungerhead Zinfandel is an easy-drinking wine sourced from several vineyards in Dry Creek and neighboring appellations. It is medium bodied with red berry fruit on the nose and palate with hints of spice and herbs. It is straight-forward with a hint of sweetness on the finish.

Pomar Junction (Paso Robles) The Merrill Family, owners of Pomar Junction Vineyard and Winery, have been growing grapes on the Central Coast for more than eight generations. After growing grapes for many of California's finest wineries, they decided to produce their own wines. Jim Shumate, former consulting winemaker at Templeton Wine Services, serves as winemaker. All the wines are produced from estate-grown fruit. www.pomarjunction.com

Pomar Junction 2014 Estate Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$38) 89 The Estate Zinfandel displays sweet ripe black cherry fruit and a hint of toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it reveals a creamy mouth feel with a soft texture and good density of flavor. A crowd pleaser. **Pomar Junction 2013 Zinfandel Reserve Paso Robles (\$54) 90** The 2013 Zinfandel Reserve is a more elegant and complex wine than the Estate Zinfandel. A blend of the best barrels from the estate vineyard, it is medium weight and offers red and blueberry fruit and sweet oak on the nose. Aged 22 months in 66% new oak, the palate reveals a soft texture, although the tannins are still rather firm and would benefit from further bottle aging.



Prospect Cellars (Amador County) A family-owned and operated winery, Prospect Cellars is located in the town of Plymouth in Amador County. The current proprietors, Ronn and Jaimie Lubenko, are sixth generation growers whose family planted Zinfandel in the mid-19th century. They craft two

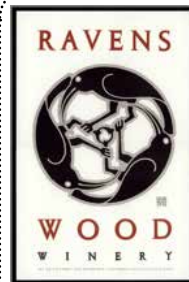
excellent Zinfandels from purchased grapes. www.prospectcellars.com

Prospect Cellars 2015 Pay Dirt Zinfandel Amador County (\$24) 90+ The 2015 Pay Dirt Zinfandel is a blend of grapes from the 45 year old hillside Delpart Vineyard and the 90-year old organic D'Agostini vineyard. It offers aromas of red berries and herbs and shows good mid-palate richness and concentration. Aged in French oak, 20% new, it is beautifully balanced with good natural acidity and a long finish. Well done. **Prospect Cellars 2015 Gold Digger Amador County (\$20) 91** The 2015 Gold Digger is an attractive blend of 57% Zinfandel and 43% Barbera, Sangiovese and Petite Sirah. It displays a medium red robe and is lush on the attack with nice purity of flavor. It offers hints of cinnamon and cherry up front with good mid-palate richness and nice lingering extract on the finish.



Quivira (Dry Creek Valley) Established in Dry Creek Valley in 1981 by Henry and Holly Wendt, Peter and Terri Knight bought the winery in the spring of 2006. The winery is comprised of three vineyards totaling over 90 acres. Winemaker Hugh Chappelle's Masters degree from UC Davis in Viticulture and Enology as well as his previous experience developing a Zinfandel program make him a perfect fit for Quivira, where Zinfandels comprise over a quarter of wines produced, including the three excellent Zinfandels reviewed here. The Black Boar, a blend of Zinfandel and Petit Sirah, is truly outstanding. www.quivirawine.com

Quivira 2014 Flight Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$42) 91 Opaque ruby. The Flight displays dense concentrated dark fruit flavors and spice box on the attack. On the palate it reveals a soft texture and dark brawny fruit flavors with hints of oak and earth, and a long finish. Bold and beautiful. Sourced from the high bench sandy soils of Quivira's Anderson Ranch. **Quivira 2013 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$24) 89** The 2013 Quivira Zinfandel reveals a dark ruby color and bold flavors of black cherry and plum. It has good acidity and overall freshness and a long finish. It is a tasty Zinfandel although we prefer the other two wines in this trio. **Quivira 2014 Black Boar Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$45) 92** Dark ruby. The Black Boar offers aromas of black cherry, plum and toasted oak. On the palate it reveals a silky smooth texture, rich and pure dark fruit flavors, and a hint of cedar with good density, soft tannins, and a persistent finish. A beautiful blend of 82% Zinfandel and 18% Petit Sirah.



Ravenswood (Sonoma) Joel Peterson started his wine career as a Zinfandel garagiste, making just a few hundred cases a year when his newly founded Ravenswood winery opened for business in 1976. He quickly became famous for his Zinfandel, especially the single vineyard series made from low yielding old vines. When Joel Peterson sold Ravenswood to wine giant Constellation Brands in 2001, some critics expressed trepidation. But Joel continues to make the wine from the same low yielding, old vineyards and using the same time-tested techniques—native yeasts, open top fermenters, extended time on the skins, and aging in French oak barriques. Ravenswood's single vineyard wines are their best, and that's mostly what we tasted for this report. These Sonoma vineyards are mostly old vine Zinfandel field blends that reveal their terroir. www.ravenswoodwinery.com

Ravenswood 2015 Vintner's Blend California (\$10) 89 This is a terrific entry-level Zinfandel—bright, fresh, and pleasant to drink. Mainly sourced from Lodi grapes, it is easy drinking, fruity and flavorful with hints of herbs. Great value.

Old Vine Zinfandels: These Zinfandels are made from old vines, at least 55 years old from different vineyards of each region of California's North Coast.

Ravenswood 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$15) 90 The Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi boasts aromas of dark cherry and is medium weight with a spicy touch of cedar and herbs and a candied rich essence of dark cherry and blue berry. On the back end, it reveals earthy notes, firm tannins and good length. **Ravenswood 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Mendocino County (\$15) 90** The Old Vine Zinfandel Mendocino is endowed with red berry aromas and a palate of rich high toned fruit. It is elegant with firm tannins, good acidity and a firm finish. **Ravenswood 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$15) 91** The Old Vine Zinfandel Sonoma County boasts ripe aromas of black cherry, plum and cola. It has good depth of dark fruit flavor and fullness on the palate with hints of pepper and spice commonly found in Dry Creek fruit. **Ravenswood 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$15) 91** The Old Vine Zinfandel Napa reveals a perfumed nose of plums and blueberry and a superb palate with a chalky aspect and savory notes. It shows good intensity of flavor on the mid-palate and a long finish.

Single Vineyard Zinfandels: These Zinfandels are made from old vines of some of California's finest vineyards.

Ravenswood 2014 Single Vineyard Zinfandel Dickerson Vineyard Napa Valley (\$60) 93 The 2014 Single Vineyard Zinfandel Dickerson displays complex aromas and flavors of red plum, loam, mint and spice box. It offers seamless layers of black cherry fruit with hints of toasted oak and eucalyptus. Firmly structured, it is broad, mouth filling and rich on the finish. Planted in 1920. **Ravenswood 2014 Single Vineyard Zinfandel Teldeschi Dry Creek Valley (\$60) 93+** The 2014 Single Vineyard Zinfandel Teldeschi is endowed with Dry Creek's spicy black cherry and plum with hints of loam and minerals. It is super saturated with a silky textured palate. Sourced from the East side benchlands of Dry Creek where the soils are deep and vines are old. **Ravenswood 2014 Single Vineyard Zinfandel Barrica Sonoma Valley (\$60) 93** The Barrica has a rich nose of ripe dark red and blueberry fruit. It has a silky attack, with concentrated flavors and dark spices, firm tannins and a long finish. The oldest vines are from 1888. **Ravenswood 2014 Single Vineyard Zinfandel Old Hill Sonoma Valley (\$60) 94** The 2014 Single Vineyard Zinfandel Old Hills impresses with its complex nose of red and black fruit, pepper, vanilla, coffee and mint. On the palate it is silky and mouth filling. Although not as dense as the Barrica it is more elegant and refined. Sourced from the Old Hill Vineyard replanted in 1885. **Ravenswood 2014 Zinfandel Big River Vineyard Alexander Valley (\$60) 92** There is a lot of up front fruit in the 2014 Big River Zinfandel. Dark red berries, blackberries, pepper and spice are all present. The mid-palate is dense and rich. The Big River Vineyard is one of most beautiful vineyards in Sonoma County; it has very red soils with yields of

2-2.5 tons/acre. **Ravenswood 2014 Zinfandel Bedrock Vineyard Sonoma Valley (\$39) 94** The Single Vineyard Bedrock offers rich aromas of blackberry and cassis. It has wonderful mouth feel with an explosion of ripe fruit flavors and a touch of mineral slate. It has a beautiful finish with rich extract. A blend of 77% Zinfandel, 8% Petite Sirah, 8% Carignanee, and 7% Alicante Bouschet.



RENWOOD
— WINERY —

Renwood (Amador County) was established in 1993 and is one of the most respected Zinfandel producers in the Sierra Foothills. In 2011, the Argentine industrialist Alejandro Bulgheroni arrived in Amador County with consulting winemakers Alberto Antonini and Carlos Pulenta, purchased Renwood winery and has since invested heavily to put it at the forefront of quality Zinfandel producers. The talented Joe Shebl is winemaker. www.renwood.com

Renwood Winery 2014 Premier Old Vine Zinfandel Amador County (\$20) 89 The 2014 Premier Old Vine Zinfandel is a tasty Zinfandel offering aromas of plum and black cherry. It is a blend of several vineyards aged 20 months in French oak. It is fresh tasting with good mid-palate richness, soft tannins and a soft finish. **Renwood Winery 2014 Zinfandel Storey Vineyard Amador County (\$40) 92** Sourced from the historic 101-year-old Storey Vineyard, this Zinfandel is endowed with dense, complex and earthy flavors. It is a complex and layered wine offering aromas of herbs and black pepper. On the palate it reveals lovely red berry fruit with good density of flavor and a firm fruit rich finish. **Renwood Winery 2014 Zinfandel Zanini Fiddletown (\$100) 92** The 2014 Zinfandel Zanini is endowed with black cherry and blackberry aromas. It has a velvet mouth feel with good mid-palate density and overall richness. Barrel aged for 22 months in French oak, 40% new, it has firm tannins and a soft finish. Give it time, **Renwood Winery 2014 Zinfandel Jack Rabbit Flat (\$50) 90** The 2014 Zinfandel Jack Rabbit Flat is a flavorful blend of 75% Zinfandel and 25% Petit Sirah. It displays aromas of black cherry, herbs and spices. While not a complex wine, it is rich in flavor and displays dense fruit. Sourced from 103 year-old vines. Barrel aged for 22 months in 100% French oak. **Renwood Winery 2013 Grand Wren Amador County (\$100) 95** The Grand Wren is a barrel selected 95% Zinfandel with fabulous breeding. It is rich and dense on the palate with black fruit, pepper and spice. It has amazing freshness with good structure and acidity and overall richness. Aged 18 months in 100% new French oak, it has great aging potential, but for now would be best kept in the cellar for a couple of years at least. Bravo.

RIDGE VINEYARDS

Ridge Vineyards (Sonoma County) was founded in the early 1960s by a group of Stanford Research Institute researchers with no prior experience in winemaking.

Winemaker Paul Draper was hired in 1969 and built Ridge's reputation as one of California's finest wineries. The winery is best known for its old vine Zinfandel-based blends. The wines are unique and terroir-driven, often with earthy, dark fruit tannic structures that require time. www.ridgevine.com

Ridge Vineyards 2014 Lytton Springs (\$40) 91 The 2014 Lytton Springs is a tasty blend of 69% Zinfandel, 18% Petite Sirah and the rest Mourvedre and Carignane. Aged in American oak, 20% new, it boasts plums and dark fruit flavors with hints of baking spice. Tar-like with loam and tobacco flavors, it is richly extracted and mouth filling with firm round tannins. Needs a few years of cellaring for maximum enjoyment. **Ridge Vineyards 2014 Pagani Ranch Zinfandel (\$40) 93** The Pagani Ranch is endowed with bold flavors of black and blue berries with a hint of chocolate. Opaque ruby purple in color, it is a blend of 80% Zinfandel, 17% Alicante Bouschet and the rest Petite Sirah. Aged in American oak, it boasts a soft texture with good structure and is ripe and lush on the finish. A delicious wine. **Ridge Vineyards 2014 Ponzio Zinfandel Russian River Valley (\$32) 90+** The 2014 Zinfandel Ponzio Vineyard displays a ruby purple color and aromas of brambly red fruit with hints of herbs and tar. It is nicely structured with good acidity and has a long and engaging finish.



Robert Biale Vineyards (Napa) Robert Biale makes Zinfandel like Pinot Noir, dropping fruit in three separate passes and then carefully sorting, very gently pressing (0.6-0.8 bars), keeping press fractions separate, using small (4-

12 tons) open top fermenters, and aging in French Burgundy barrels, about 25% new. As a result, the wines are especially refined, although with lush dense fruit. Among "Zin geeks" Bob Biale is considered the "Grand Master" of Zinfandel in Napa Valley. www.biale.com

Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Black Chicken Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$48) 93 The Black Chicken Zinfandel is one of Robert Biale's finest wines. It is perfectly integrated, offering red and blue berries and spice on the nose with a hint of herbs and loam. It is a complete wine with layers of flavor, excellent integration of oak, and beautifully balanced. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Falleri Vineyard Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$62) 90** This small historic vineyard in Calistoga grows excellent light-styled Zinfandel. It offers delicate aromas and flavors of dried cherry and

strawberry with hints of orchard fruit and plum. On the palate it is lightly flavored, medium bodied and dry on the finish. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Monte Rosso Vineyard Zinfandel Moon Mountain (\$62) 92** The Zinfandel Monte Rosso captures the intense black cherry and earthy aromas typical of this special vineyard. It is a dense wine with a full mouth feel and hints of underbrush and black pepper. Nicely concentrated on the palate, it shows good extract on a very long finish. Should improve with more age and time in the bottle. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Old Kraft Vineyard Zinfandel St. Helena (\$52) 91** This is a lovely and flavorful wine with ripe red berry fruit flavors sourced from an old Napa Valley vineyard. Medium dark ruby in color it offers attractive Pinot Noir-like red berry fruit, high acidity and a firm structure. It also is endowed with a pure red fruited finish. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Pagani Ranch Vineyard Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$52) 90** The Zinfandel Pagani Ranch exhibits earthy and fragrant black cherry and red raspberry fruit. It has a lovely texture with high acidity and dryness. It is nicely flavored albeit tart on the finish suggesting it may need more time to soften and integrate for optimal enjoyment. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 R.W. Moore Vineyard Zinfandel Coombsville Napa County (\$55) 92** The R.W. Moore Vineyard is another outstanding historic Zinfandel vineyard. This wine displays dark red and plum fruit with hints of herbs and minerals. It is endowed with a soft texture, concentrated mid-palate flavor and superb length. There are firm tannins at the mid-palate that will soften over time suggesting this wine will improve over the coming years. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Rockpile Vineyard Zinfandel Rockpile (\$50) 94** This is a magnificent Zinfandel sourced from the Rockpile Vineyard, one of the finest vineyards in the northern reaches of Sonoma County. It offers ripe red raspberry with touches of pomegranate on nose. It has a lovely soft mouth feel with superb purity of fruit on the palate. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Varozza Vineyard Zinfandel St. Helena Napa Valley (\$50) 91** The Zinfandel Varozza Vineyard offers attractive Pinot Noir like aromas and a silky mouth feel. It is soft and elegant on the plate with intense red berry fruit flavors and lingering ripe extract. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Zinfandel Founding Farmers Napa Valley (\$38) 90** The Zinfandel Founding Farmers is sourced from an old Zinfandel vineyard in St. Helena. It offers fragrant aromas of dried cherry skin and red raspberry. It is medium-weight and light on the palate with moderate intensity of flavor and a short finish. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2013 Zinfandel Limerick Lane Russian River Valley (\$62) 93** This is a lovely wine sourced from one of Russian River Valley's finest Zin vineyards. It is a combination of old and young hillside vines and reveals dark fruited and spicy flavors with fragrant red raspberries. Very nicely flavored with a lush texture, high acidity and a long lasting finish. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2014 Zinfandel Stage Coach Napa Valley (\$50) 90** The 2014 Zinfandel Stagecoach is sourced from young Zinfandel vines (1999) on volcanic soils. It offers black cherry and plum on the nose with a soft texture and briary red berry fruit. It also reveals light toast and earthy fruit spices on the finish. Pleasant drinking. **Robert Biale Vineyards 2015 Zinfandel Valsecchi Vineyard Carneros District Sonoma County**

(\$58) 91 The Zinfandel Valsecchi Vineyard displays red raspberry and black fruit on the nose. It has lovely silky mouth feel and pure fruit flavors. Feminine in character, it reveals elegant and exotic floral notes with crisp acidity and a flavorful fresh finish.



Rock Wall Wine Company (Alameda) Housed in a converted 40,000 square-foot airplane

hanger that previously served as a US naval airbase, Rock Wall Wine Company is producing some of California's finest Zinfandels. It is owned and operated by the father and daughter team of Kent and Shauna Rosenblum. Kent is one of the pioneers of California's wine industry, having produced some of the finest Zinfandels in his eponymous winery until it was acquired by Diageo in 2008. Today he serves as CEO of Rock Wall Wine Company, established in 2008, and helps craft the wines with daughter Shauna who is designated winemaker. Rock Wall Zinfandels are sourced from the very finest vineyards in California and are high quality. www.rockwallwines.com

Rock Wall 2013 Harris Kratka Ranch Alexander Valley

(\$40) 91 The Harris Kratka Ranch is a blend of 75% Zinfandel, 15% Carignanee and 10% Petite Sirah with fruit sourced from a renewed hillside vineyard originally planted some 70 years ago. Dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of blackberry and boysenberry with hints of earth and underbrush. It is soft on the attack, round on the palate with good acidity and mature tannins. Lovely wine. **Rock Wall 2014 Pearl Hart Reserve Contra Costa County**

(\$50) 92 This lovely Zinfandel is sourced from grape vines in Contra Costa County. Dark ruby in color, it offers fruity aromas of black cherry, boysenberry and hints of chocolate. On the palate it has a silky texture with medium acidity, soft round tannins and a persistent finish. A wine of considerable finesse. **Rock Wall 2015 Zinfandel 2015 Hendry Vineyard Block 29 Napa Valley**

(\$40) 91 This stunning aromatic Zinfandel offers aromas of blackberry and boysenberry with notes of spice and nutmeg. It is soft and lush on the palate revealing great density of black and red fruit flavors and mouth filling richness. The wine is perfectly balanced with phenomenal understated sweetness and fruitiness on the back end and on the long finish. **Rock Wall 2015 Zinfandel Alegria Vineyard Russian River Valley**

(\$45) 90 The 2015 Zinfandel Alegria Vineyard is an intriguing field blend of 75% Zinfandel and 22+ varieties. It is endowed with sweet black cherry fruit and hints of violets and licorice. It is soft and lush on the palate and richly flavored with lots of up front fruit but light on the mid-palate. Aged in new and neutral American and French oak. **Rock Wall 2015 Zinfandel Reserve Monte Rosso Vineyard Sonoma Valley**

(\$55) 89 This Zinfandel

was sourced from a small block planted in 1900 in the legendary Monte Rosso Vineyard. It offers a spicy nose of very ripe red berry fruit and hints of minerals. Aged 50% in new French oak and 50% in used American oak, it is soft on the attack with moderate flavor intensity, brambly fruit on the palate, and firm tannins on the finish.



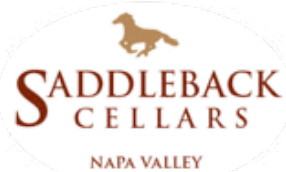
Rombauer Vineyards (Napa Valley) was founded by Koerner Rombauer in 1980

and quickly acquired fame for its flavorful Zinfandels. Today, Rombauer makes several different Zinfandels and sources fruit from some of California's leading vineyard sources, including Diener, Dillian, El Dorado, Ferrero, and Rinaldi. Richie Allen is the lead winemaker. www.rombauer.com

Rombauer Vineyards 2015 Zinfandel CA (\$32) 88 The classic Rombauer Zinfandel is endowed with a spicy plum nose with hints of vanilla. It is soft and round on the palate with good density of flavor. Lush but in need of more structure and focus for long term drinking enjoyment.

Rombauer Vineyards 2014 Fiddletown Zinfandel Fiddletown Amador County (\$45) 89 This Zinfandel is sourced from a head-trained, dry-farmed vineyard of Gino Rinaldi originally established in 1865 situated at 1600 to 1800 feet in the Sierra Foothills. Aged 15 months in American oak, it offers earthy scents of lush red and black berry fruit with hints of kirsch and vanilla spices and a long finish.

Rossi-Wallace 2015 Zinfandel, Napa Valley (\$28) 90+ This offering is a lovely blend of 80% Zinfandel and 20% Sangiovese. The Zinfandel was sourced from a high-elevation vineyard in the cool Chiles Valley, the Sangiovese from the Antinori Vineyard. It reveals pure cherry and raspberry on the nose with a hint of spice. It has a crisp and refined palate with good concentration, lovely natural acidity and lots of finesse. Only 8 barrels produced.



Saddleback Cellars (Napa Valley) was established in 1981 by Nils Venge, the son of Danish immigrants. He purchased the Saddleback Cellars estate in 1976 and produced his first wine

from the 14.8 acre estate vineyard in 1982. He has only 0.3 acres of Zinfandel but does a good job with them. www.saddlebackcellars.com

Saddleback Cellars 2014 Zinfandel Napa Valley (\$46) 93 This is a polished Zinfandel, rich in black currant flavor and sweet oak sourced from the Frediani Vineyard in Calistoga. It is concentrated and beautifully balanced on

the palate with soft round tannins, notes of spice and a long finish. A blend of 95% Zinfandel and 5% Petit Sirah, aged 14 months in 65% new American oak. A beautiful wine.



Sbragia (Dry Creek Valley) This third generation family winery specializes in single vineyard small case productions of Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon. Ed Sbragia was long-time master winemaker at Beringer. Most of the wines are estate bottled, although some are sourced from neighboring vineyards in Sonoma County. Sbragia produces two main

Zinfandels: La Promessa Zinfandel from their seven-acre La Promessa Vineyard planted in 1999 and Gino's Zinfandel, a field blend sourced from three Sonoma County vineyards. The wines here are crafted in a big, ripe and rich-tasting style. Ed and Adam Sbragia are at the helm. The wines are of excellent quality and are reasonably priced. www.sbragia.com

Sbragia Family Vineyards 2013 Gino's Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$34) 92

Gino's Zinfandel is sourced from three Dry Creek Valley vineyards and is a field blend of 90% Zinfandel, 5% Petite Sirah and 5% Carignanee. It offers red fruit and a touch of cola on the nose. It is lush on the attack with a brightly flavored palate, and a fruit driven finish. **Sbragia Family Vineyards 2014 Italo's Vineyard Zinfandel Alexander Valley (\$36) 91**The 2014 Zinfandel Italo's Vineyard is sourced from the family vineyard planted after the repeal of Prohibition. It is a high toned spicy wine revealing dark plum and black cherry aromas. It has good structure and balance, purity of fruit flavors and a wonderful finish. **Sbragia Family Vineyards 2014 La Promessa Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$40) 90** The La Promessa displays a floral nose with baking spices, rose petals, and a touch of raspberry compote. Offering nice freshness on the palate, it reveals elegance and a mix of concentrated flavors of cranberry, underbrush and earth. An elegant wine with good acidity and freshness and excellent length. **Sbragia Family Vineyards 2014 Zinfandel Nonno's Reserve Dry Creek Valley (\$44) 92** The 2014 Zinfandel Nonno's Reserve is a compelling wine, It offers aromas of black cherry and brown cooking spices followed by a soft and suave attack of ripe red fruit flavors with lots of spice. It has mid-palate richness, purity and a persistent finish.



Scott Harvey (Amador County) Scott Harvey's long career in the wine business was, until recently, in others' wineries. After his student days in Sacramento,

he headed back to Germany (where he had been an exchange student in high school) to train in the Pfalz region. On his return, Scott landed back in his native Amador County in the Sierra Foothills, planting vineyards and making wine for the likes of Story, Santino and Renwood. His work in the cause of high-quality Zinfandels helped put Amador County on the wine map. Scott moved on to Napa where he became winemaker, president and partner of Folie a Deux, which he sold in 2004. That same year, Scott—along with his industry veteran wife Jana—launched his own line of wines using grapes from vineyards he had planted and worked with in Amador. Along with Scott Harvey wines, he continues to build other brands, including wines from Napa Valley under his wife's namesake, Jana. www.scottharvey.com

Scott Harvey Wines 2013 InZinerator California (\$20) 88

The InZinerator is a pleasant easy-drinking blend of Zinfandel, Syrah, Barbera and Forte. According to Scott Harvey, the Syrah provides color and weight to the wine and Mega Red gives it a New World style. The wine boasts red cherry flavor and a soft palate with good acidity and a medium finish. **Scott Harvey Wines 2013 Vineyard 1869 Zinfandel Amador County (\$48) 90** The Vineyard 1869 is the top of the line of this Zinfandel trio. A blend of 87% Zinfandel and 13% Syrah, it is a well endowed wine with ripe and briary flavors of blackberry and pomegranate combined with hints of coffee, toast and loam. A well-made wine, it is nicely balanced with a silky texture, firm round tannins and a long finish. **Scott Harvey Wines 2013 Mountain Selection Zinfandel Amador County (\$18) 90** Made for every day consumption, the Mountain Selection offers ripe cranberry and black cherry aromas and flavors with hints of brown spices and chocolate. 100% Zinfandel, it is sourced from several vineyards including Vineyard 1869 and made in a ripe raisin-like style. Pleasant drinking.



Seghesio (Dry Creek Valley) In 1895 Edoardo Seghesio planted his first vineyard in the Alexander Valley. Over the next five generations the Seghesio Family Vineyard became

one of the most successful wineries in Sonoma County. Seghesio is best known for its Zinfandels, which are among the best produced in California. The Home Ranch Zinfandel, Seghesio's flagship made from the 1895 vineyard, shows the very high level of quality that can be produced from Sonoma's old Zinfandel. Located in Healdsburg, Seghesio is today owned by the Napa-based Crimson Wine Group. www.seghesio.com

Seghesio 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Sonoma County (\$40)

92 The 2014 Seghesio Old Vine Zinfandel is a blend of grapes from Dry Creek Valley and Alexander Valley vineyards. It is endowed with pure raspberry and plum aromas on the nose. On the palate it has a velvet texture, pure and elegant with a soft mouth feel and perfect balance. It has round tannins, some underbrush and a long finish.

Seghesio 2013 Cortina Dry Creek Valley (\$40)

93 What a superb wine! Rich in extract with lovely flavors of blackberry fruit and chocolate. This has got to be one of the quintessential California Zinfandels, offering purity of fruit, dense flavor and soft round tannins, combined in perfect balance.

Seghesio 2013 Home Ranch Zinfandel

Alexander Valley (\$58) 94 The 2013 Zinfandel Home Ranch is sourced from the vineyard originally planted by Edoardo Zeghesio in 1895. It offers spicy cherry and an underbrush nose, and is clean and pure on the attack with dense cherry fruit flavors and light earthy notes. It is a delicious wine, beautifully balanced with excellent extract, finesse, and a long finish. This Zinfandel places Seghesio in the top tier of Zinfandel producers in California.



St. Amant Winery

(Lodi) Founded in 1979 by Tim and Barbara Spencer, this family owned winery in Lodi produces small quantities of handcrafted Zinfandel of excellent quality following simple

traditional techniques. The grapes for their Zinfandels are sourced from the 235 acre Mohr-Fry Ranch, consisting of 9 separate blocks of own-rooted old vines dating back to 1901, and Marian's Vineyard, an 8.3 acre own rooted old Zinfandel vineyard also within the Mohr-Fry Ranch. Tim Spencer serves as winemaker. The quality of the Zinfandels produced here is very high.

www.stamatwine.com

St. Amant 2015 Old Vine Zinfandel Mohr-Fry Ranch Lodi

(\$18) 91 The 2015 Old Vine Zinfandel Mohr-Fry Ranch offers lovely fresh black raspberry fruit on the nose. Fresher and more lively than the 2013 vintage also tasted, it displays medium weight on the palate, good mid-palate richness, and a touch of green herbs on the finish.

St. Amant 2015 Zinfandel Marian's Old Vine Lodi (\$24) 93

Marian's Old Vine Zinfandel is sourced from an 8.3 acre own-rooted vineyard planted in 1901. It displays a dark ruby color and aromas of fresh red berry fruit. On the palate it offers a silky attack with more dark red fruit and a hint of herbs with a rich balsamic note. Aged in French oak and nicely structured.



St. Francis Winery's

(Sonoma) founder Joe Martin fell in love with Sonoma Valley and established St. Francis Vineyard in the 1970s, planting 22 acres of

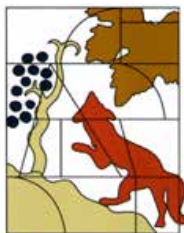
Chardonnay and the first 60 acres of Merlot in Sonoma Valley. St. Francis is a Certified Sustainable, family-owned winery, and it has worked throughout its 42-year history to preserve Sonoma County's natural resources. The state-of-the-art winery built in 1999 includes a 457-kilowatt solar energy system, and St. Francis has been recognized for its work to conserve nearby creeks and waterways. Preserving Sonoma County for future generations is very much a part of St. Francis. The winemaker is Katie Madigan. www.stfranciswinery.com

St. Francis Winery 2014 Zinfandel San Giovanetti Russian River Valley (\$48) 92

The 2014 Zinfandel San Giovanetti is endowed with ripe raspberry aromas with a hint of baking spice. Very dense on the palate, it reveals flavors of cranberry and rhubarb with light licorice notes. It has excellent extract on a long finish. A pure, refined wine of great character.

St. Francis Winery 2014 Zinfandel

Tres Viejos Sonoma County (\$48) 94 The 2014 Zinfandel Tres Viejos is a blend of 85% Zinfandel, 10% Petite Sirah and 5% mixed blacks from three regions across Sonoma County: the Russian River Valley, Dry Creek Valley and Sonoma Valley. The wine beautifully integrates the distinctive characteristics of the grapes from these regions providing a seamless and beautifully balanced Zinfandel of red and black fruit. Aged 16 months, this Zinfandel is refined and elegant with a long finish.



STORYBOOK MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS

Storybook Mountain (Napa Valley), located at the top of the Napa Valley four miles north of Calistoga on the eastern slope of the Maycamas Mountain Range and was originally called the Grimm Vineyards and Wine Vaults. Jerry Sep purchased 90 acres of high altitude terrain (up to 2000') surrounding the original winery in 1976 and in 1983 released his first Zinfandel. Jerry is one of the true modern Zinfandel pioneers, creating ZAP in 1990.

His daughter, Colleen Williams, now does much of the winemaking. www.storeybookwines.com

Storybook Mountain 2013 Zinfandel Estate Reserve Napa Valley (\$68) 90

This is one of several Zinfandels produced by this pioneering Napa Valley estate. It offers ripe red berry fruit with good concentration, earthiness and big tannins. It is well structured like many other Napa Valley

Zinfandels but without a lot of fruitiness. (Tasted along with the 2003 Zinfandel Estate, which revealed an earthy mineral-laden, terroir-focused character without much fruit.)

Summerwood Winery & Inn 2015 Zinfandel Paso Robles (\$40) 90 Dark ruby. This Zinfandel is soft on the attack and quite lush on the palate with earth and red fruited flavors at the core. Medium-bodied with a soft texture, ripe extract and excellent length, it has a very good finish.



**T-VINE
WINERY**

Russian River Valley, Calistoga and elsewhere. www.tvinewinery.com

T-Vine Winery (Napa Valley) Founded in 1992 in Calistoga by Greg Brown, T-Vine Winery hand crafts small lots of premium wines from unique varieties, old vines and seasoned growers. The winery is currently owned by James Harder, Jim Regusci and a third partner. They produce several outstanding Zinfandels from the very best growers in Howell Mountain,

T-Vine Winery 2014 Zinfandel Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$40) 92 Dark ruby. Aromatic black cherry, spice box and toast on the nose. Soft on the attack with a sweet lovely texture and elegant mouth feel. Aged 16 months in new American oak, it has concentrated and juicy black cherries, firm round tannins and a persistent finish. Bacigalupi Vineyard is one of the finest and most meticulously managed vineyards in Russian River Valley and is prized for its quality. **T-Vine Winery 2014 Zinfandel Black Sears Vineyard Howell Mountain (\$60) 94** This Zinfandel is from a small block of the coveted Black Sears Vineyard in Howell Mountain situated 2400 feet above sea level. Opaque ruby in color, it exhibits aromas of earth, black currant fruit, baking spices and minerals. Soft on the attack, it reveals dense brambly plum mountain fruit, round tannins and a long persistent finish. A superb wine.



Terra d'Oro (Amador County) Bob Trinchero's wines were first released in 1973 under the Montevina label, the first winery in Amador County to produce wine since Prohibition ended.

Today, it has 400 acres of estate vines and some old historic vineyards. Terra d'Oro specializes in Zinfandel and has had a long-term relationship with the Deaver Vineyard and other old vineyards with head-trained vines. Terra d'Oro's winemaking team is directed by the talented veteran winemaker Chris Leamy. www.terradorowinery.com

Montevina 2014 Skyland Ridge Zinfandel Amador County (\$10) 87 This entry level Zinfandel offers aromas of earthy red cherry and huckleberry. It is a bit tart with bright acidity, huckleberry and light tobacco flavors with good

length. **Montevina 2015 Summit Ridge White Zinfandel Amador County (\$7) 87.** This white Zinfandel reveals a nice strawberry nose and good off dry strawberry and red berry flavors. **Terra d'Oro 2015 Zinfandel Amador (\$16) 89** The Zinfandel Amador reveals aromas and flavors of red and black fruit with stemmy and earthy scents. It is soft on the attack with mid-palate earthiness and a dry finish. **Terra d'Oro 2015 Deaver Old Vine Zinfandel Amador County (\$30) 93** The magnificent 130-year-old Deaver vineyard is the source for this lovely Zinfandel. It reveals a smoky, herbal nose with underlying red plum and berry fruit. Firmly tannic on the palate, it has sweet notes on the palate with high acidity and a long finish. **Terra d'Oro 2015 SHR Field Blend Amador County 93** This is an attractive blend of 80% Zinfandel and small amounts of Petit Sirah and Barbera harvested together and co-fermented. It consists of warm brown spices, rose petals, and a red plum nose. Soft and lush, almost creamy on the palate, it reveals excellent depth of flavor and fills the mouth. It reveals a note of underbrush on the palate along with red and dark red fruit. Lovely lush feel. **Terra d'Oro 2015 Zinfandel Home Vineyard Amador Valley (\$30) 92** The Zinfandel Home Vineyard is sourced from a four-acre parcel dating back to 1999, its first vintage. It features opulent red fruit and sweet oak with a very pretty nose of raspberry and red cherry and hints of light tobacco notes; it also reveals lovely clean and pure red fruit on the palate of medium weight and is quite refined with a clean finish showing light spice notes. **Terra d'Oro NV Zinfandel Port Amador Valley (\$24) 90** This Port is a blend of many different wines from two to six years old solera in style, mainly from the 2011 and 2012 vintages. Ruby port in character it offers jammy red fruit, strawberry, cherry jam with a hint of black licorice and a linear focused palate.



Three Wine Company (Contra Costa) Previously winemaker until 2001 with his brother at Cline Cellars, Matt Cline started his "Three" label in 2008, focusing on historical California varieties like Zinfandel. He produces four different Zinfandels, including three from Contra Costa's old vineyards like Evangelho and

Live Oak. Matt crafts very fine Zinfandels. www.threewinecompany.com

Three Wine Company 2014 Zinfandel Old Vines Contra Costa County (\$22) 91 This offering is fruit forward with aromas of black cherry, plum and notes of coffee and dark chocolate. On the palate it reveals concentrated fruit flavors with a soft texture, bright acidity, light tannic grip and a persistent finish. **Three Wine Company 2014 Zinfandel Live Oak Contra Costa County (\$34) 88** Medium dark ruby. The Live Oak displays light red berry fruit and a touch of honeyed oak. It is soft and plush on the attack, fruit forward, with hints of alcohol, and a dry tannic finish. **Three Wine Company 2014 Zinfandel Bigelow Contra Costa County (\$34) 93** This Zinfandel is the top wine of

this threesome. It exhibits an opaque color and aromas of earth, graphite, cassis and roasted herbs. It is rich and mouth filling on the palate offering dark fruit with a blueberry note and well integrated oak. It has a lovely texture with soft tannins and a long finish.



Tin Barn Vineyards (Russian River Valley) was launched in 2000 by winemaker Michael Lancaster and friends. He attended the UC Davis enology program and made wine at Gloria

Ferrer and Quail Ridge before setting out on his own, crafting special single vineyard wines from Sonoma County. He makes Zinfandel from the Russian River Valley and from the Sonoma Valley. www.tinvineyards.com

Tin Barn 2013 Zinfandel Gilsson Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$29) 92 The 2013 Zinfandel Gilsson Vineyard displays a dark ruby color and spicy red and black fruit on the palate. The mid-palate reveals good intensity, excellent natural acidity and a persistent finish. A Zinfandel with good breeding.



Tofanelli Family Vineyards (Napa Valley) is located near the town of Calistoga in the northern reaches of the Napa Valley. The vineyards were first planted in 1930 by the grandfather of the current owner and winemaker,

Vince Tofanelli. The estate consists of 25 planted acres of head-trained and dry-farmed vines, of which half are devoted to Zinfandel. Tofanelli is also one of the few growers of Charbono in California. The Tofanelli family initially sold their Zinfandel grapes to Turley Cellars and other wineries. The Estate Zinfandel is first-rate. www.tofanelliwine.com

Tofanelli Wines 2014 Estate Zinfandel Calistoga Napa Valley (\$42) 92 This tiny producer has crafted a magnificent wine of 85% Zinfandel and 15% of Grenache, Petit Sirah, and Mondeuse Noir. It boasts a lovely dark ruby color and aromas of cherry and raspberry with hints of baking spices and herbs on the nose. On the palate it offers a silky lush attack with concentrated fruit flavors, firm tannins and a long finish. Only 280 cases made.



TRENTADUE

Trentadue (Alexander Valley) This Italian family winery was established in Geyserville in the early 1960s by Leo and Evelyn Trentadue. They own 200 acres, much of it planted to Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Carignanee and Italian varieties. The Trentadues have been a major source of grapes for Ridge Vineyard since 1967. Miro Tcholakov has served as winemaker since 1999, crafting these wines as well as some under his own label. www.trentadue.com

Trentadue's 2014 Zinfandel Alexander Valley 92+ The estate Zinfandel is a spicy and delicious wine endowed with rich complex flavors of plum, raspberry and blackberry. It reveals excellent acidity and freshness on the palate, good intensity of flavor and is long on the finish. The grapes were sourced from the oldest blocks of Zinfandel from Trentadue's Geyserville estate. **Trentadue 2014 La Storia Cuvée Nicole Alexander Valley (\$35) 90** The La Storia Cuvée Nicole is endowed with a delicious red berry nose and palate with hints of baking spices. Soft on the attack and rather delicate, it is Pinot-like in character with a hint of toast. Quite nice but not a wine for the cellar. **Trentadue 2015 Old Catch Red #43 Alexander Valley (\$12) 90** This Zinfandel blended with Petit Sirah and Carignanee is an easy drinking fruity wine with lovely aromas of plum and black cherry with a hint of oak. It is a delicious wine and a bargain at the list price.



Tres Sabores (Napa Valley) Tres Sabores is a small family-owned and operated ranch situated near the top of the Rutherford bench at the base of the Mayacamas mountain range. Julie Johnson owns the winery and serves as its winemaker. They

grow Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Sirah and Zinfandel on dry farmed and organically grown vineyards. Their Zinfandel is grown organically on 8 acres of 38 year old vines, and they do a terrific job crafting these two wines. www.tresabores.com

Tres Sabores 2014 Zinfandel Rutherford, Napa Valley 91 The 2014 Zinfandel displays a spicy black fruited nose. On the palate it reveals black raspberry and black currant fruit flavors with hints of licorice and tobacco. Overall, it is an elegant wine, perfectly balanced and refined. The 2013 vintage, which we also tasted, was similar in most respects but had more red fruit character, and we liked it a little more. **Tres Sabores 2013 Por Que No? Zin Napa Valley 91** The Por Que No? Zin is an attractive blend of 56% Zinfandel, 33% Petite Sirah and the rest Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot. It is a seamless wine with rich red and black fruit flavors and light spice. It is nicely concentrated and beautifully balanced with firm ripe tannins and an attractive finish.



Turley Wine Cellars Turley Wine Cellars was established in 1993 by Larry Turley. At last count its was producing 28 wines, most of which are

single vineyard designate Zinfandels. All of Turley's vineyards are either certified organic by California Certified Organic Farmers or are somewhere in the process, and they use all natural yeasts in the fermentations. Helen Turley, Larry Turley's sister, helped make the wines until 1995 when Ehren Jordan took over. Today, winemaking is in the hands of the talented and energetic Tegan Passalacqua. Turley's Zinfandels are indisputably among the very finest Zinfandels produced in California. Unfortunately, many of them are in short supply, and wine enthusiasts who want them need to get on their mailing list. www.turleywinecellars.com

California

Turley 2015 Juvenile Zinfandel California (\$20) 90 20 different vineyards 20 plus years. Rich dense and pure, with earthiness, high acidity. Black cherry, elegant mouth feel. 14 counties **Turley 2015 Old Vines Zinfandel California (\$25) 92** Turley's Old Vines Zinfandel is sourced from small old parcels blended together. The blend is gorgeous, offering pure red berry fruit flavors and a full mouth feel. On the palate it is rich tasting with excellent acidity, soft tannins and a long satisfying finish.

Napa Valley

Turley 2015 Heminway Vineyard Napa Valley (\$38) 95 This offering from the Heminway Vineyard in Napa Valley, is one of Turley's finest single vineyard Zinfandels. Sourced from Jay Heminway's 1700 ft Vaca Mountains' vineyard, it displays pure red and black cherry and plum on the nose followed by a lush attack of great depth and length. It is perfectly balanced with excellent natural acidity and freshness. A wine of great beauty and finesse. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Hayne Vineyard Napa Valley (\$75) 95** The Zinfandel Hayne Vineyard is the top Zinfandel from Turley Vineyards. It is sourced from the extraordinary Hayne Vineyard, planted in 1902-1903 on the west side of St. Helena under the Mayacamas Mountains on well drained alluvial soils. It is an elegant wine with pure red and black cherry fruit flavors, perfectly balanced and revealing high natural acidity with power and finesse. One of California's finest Zinfandels. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Rattlesnake Ridge Howell Mountain (\$44) 94** This Howell Mountain Zinfandel displays a dark purple color and is spicy, ripe and concentrated with blackberry fruit and licorice. It has an impressive suave texture, layers of flavor and noteworthy power, concentration, and refinement. Needs time in the bottle, but looks to have great aging potential. Certainly one of the finest Howell Mountain

Zinfandels. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Mead Ranch Atlas Peak Napa Valley (\$40) 94** The 2015 Zinfandel "Mead Ranch" is sourced from a high elevation vineyard in Atlas Peak, originally planted in 1880, although most vines are from 1973. The wine exhibits beautiful red fruit on the palate and is rich and flavorful with an unctuous mouth feel. The acidity is also noteworthy endowing the wine with great finesse and refinement. A complete wine. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Cedarman Vineyard Howell Mountain (\$32) 93** This offering is a blend of two Turley estate vineyards on Howell Mountain, The Dragon and Rattlesnake. It also contains a dollop of the Rattlesnake Petite Sirah. It is a bold earthy wine with savory dark fruit and a hint of herbs. It is medium weight with dense flavors and has firm tannins and a long finish.

Amador County

Turley 2015 Zinfandel Sadie Upton Amador County (\$40) 93 This Zinfandel offering from the Sadie Upton Vineyard is a lovely wine. It is soft and silky on the attack with flavors of red berries, black cherry, dried herbs and spice. Medium-bodied, it has good intensity of flavor, firm tannins and good natural acidity. A wine of power needing some additional time in the bottle before it can be fully enjoyed. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Judge Bell Shenandoah (\$32) 94** The 2015 Judge Bell is sourced from the head-trained dry farmed Story Vineyard in the Shenandoah Valley planted in 1907. It displays a distinctive spicy, red fruited nose with attractive scents of garrigue and herbs. It is densely flavored with superb extract combing bold flavors and refinement on the finish.

Sonoma County

Turley 2015 Zinfandel Bedrock Vineyard Sonoma Valley (\$38) 94 The Zinfandel Bedrock Vineyard consists of a field blend of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Alicante Bouschet. It offers aromas of plum, spice and black licorice. On the attack it reveals notes of underbrush followed by a silky elegant mouth feel and flavors of red and black fruit with hints of smoke. A beautiful wine from one of Sonoma's finest old vine vineyards. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Zampatti Sonoma County (\$38) 94** The Zinfandel Zampatti Vineyard is sourced from the 2.5 acre vineyard planted in the middle of Santa Rosa in the hills of Russian River Valley. The wine is endowed with slate-like richness and has fruity plum and black cherry flavors. Soft and round with good density of flavor, it has firm tannins and a long finish. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Vineyard 101 Alexander Valley (\$44) 91** This is the first release of Turley's Zinfandel Vineyard 101 which is sourced from an old two-acre site located near Geyserville that previously sold its grapes to Ravenswood. The wine is endowed with light red berry and plum aromas and shows considerable elegance and style. While not profound, it is soft and lush and easy to drink.

Contra Costa County

Turley 2015 Salvador Vineyard Contra Costa (\$38) 90 This offering is a blend of four vineyards in Contra Costa

County with self-rooted vines on deep sandy soils. It is medium dark ruby with plum jam, cinnamon and a spicy note. It is silky smooth and full on the palate and has a medium-long finish. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Duarte Vineyard Contra Costa County (\$33) 94** Medium ruby in color, this Zinfandel, sourced from four vineyards, is decidedly earthy. Endowed with dark red berry fruit, it displays a lovely soft and elegant mouth feel of clean pure fruit, firm round tannins and a long finish.

Lodi

Turley 2015 Zinfandel Kirschenmann Vineyard Lodi (\$35)

94 The Kirschenmann Vineyard was originally planted in 1915 on the east side of the Mokelumne River. These head-trained vines are ungrafted on sandy soil. The wine is fruit forward and lush on the attack with dark plum aromas and is mouth filling. Clean and pure and a little light on the mid-palate, but with good red berry jam and black raspberry flavors and a soft finish. The vineyard is owned by winemaker Tegan Passalacqua. **Turley 2005 Zinfandel Dogtown Vineyard Lodi (\$40) 93** This Zinfandel offering is endowed with spicy dark fruit. It is big and lush with ripe black raspberry fruit flavors with hints of baking spices. It is mouth filling and beautifully textured with layers of flavor. A complex wine with a very long finish. The Dogtown Vineyard was planted in 1944 and is head-trained and own-rooted on clay and volcanic soils.

Paso Robles

Turley 2015 Zinfandel Presenti Vineyard Paso Robles (\$38)

92 The 2015 Zinfandel Presenti Vineyard displays powerful aromas of dark cherry with hints of dark chocolate. It shows incredible concentration of fruit on the palate with exotic flavors, scents of violets, and rich extract on the finish. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Ueberroth Vineyard Paso Robles (\$48) 95** The Ueberroth Vineyard, planted in 1885, is one of the oldest and finest Zinfandel vineyards in Paso Robles. It has ungrafted and head trained vines planted on steep limestone slopes. It is beautifully structured with black cherry and purple plum flavors, excellent concentration, high natural acidity, and a rich full mouth feel. A bold wine of considerable breeding. **Turley 2015 Zinfandel Dusi Vineyard Paso Robles (\$43) 93** The Zinfandel Dusi Vineyard is sourced from the Dante Dusi Vineyard of head trained and dry farmed Zinfandel planted in 1945 on the west side of Paso Robles. The wine reveals briary and gamey dark berry fruit and licorice. It is nicely concentrated and very richly flavored and shows good structure and power.



V. Sattui Winery

V. Sattui Winery

(Napa Valley)

Established in 1976 in St Helena, V. Sattui is a major Zinfandel producer. It produces wines from its own estate vineyards, which

provide 70% of its grapes, and sources the balance from neighboring vineyards. Winemaking is under the direction of Brooks Painter who joined the company in 2005 and has crafted some excellent Zinfandels over the years. V. Sattui has another winery in Calistoga established in 2007. www.vsattui.com

V.Sattui 2013 Mounts Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$37)

90 The Mounts Vineyard is one of the finest sources for Zinfandel in the Dry Creek Valley. This offering displays ripe dark fruit aromas and flavors with excellent balance and depth. It is well structured with firm round tannins and a persistent finish. **V.Sattui 2013 Pilgrim Vineyard Old Vine Zinfandel Lodi (\$36) 88** Dark ruby in color, this bottling offers ripe plum and black berry aromas on the nose. On the palate it is very ripe and lush with a dry mid-palate, and a hot and tart finish. **V.Sattui 2014 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley (\$36) 89+** The 2014 Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley has a dark ruby color and is medium-weight with aromas of black cherry, plum and earth. It has ripe dark fruit on the palate with a silky texture, tannic grip, and a pleasant finish. **V.Sattui 2013 Zinfandel Black Sears Vineyard Howell Mountain (\$51) 90** This Zinfandel from the famed Black Sears Vineyard on Howell Mountain displays earthy, underbrush notes of red berries, blackberries and plum on the nose with scents of black pepper. It has a lovely soft texture on the palate with a creamy mouth feel without being overly lush and ripe. It shows good structure and acidity and a dry finish. **V.Sattui 2014 Zinfandel Crow Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$56) 89+** The Zinfandel Ancient Vine Crow Ridge Vineyard is sourced from a 20-acre Russian River Valley vineyard with 100-year-old vines situated at the Eastern end of the valley. It reveals the ripe style of Zinfandel associated with this producer. Fruit forward with red plum flavors and nuances of chocolate, brown sugar and cedar, it carries 15.1 alc. making it lush and alcoholic with a soft texture, round tannins, and a big finish. **V.Sattui 2012 Zinfandel Gillson Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$38) 91** This Zinfandel reveals a semi-opaque ruby red color with aromas of ripe black cherry and blackberry. It is lush on the palate and earthy but well balanced and nicely structured with a nice touch of oak and good persistence on the finish. **V.Sattui 2013 Zinfandel Quaglia Vineyard St. Helena (\$47) 90** Earthy, spicy underbrush notes on the nose of this Zinfandel are followed by a beautiful palate texture, without being overly lush and ripe. The wine has superb mouth feel but only moderate fruit flavor but reveals good structure and acidity with an excellent finish. Grown in the town of St. Helena. **V.Sattui 2014 Zinfandel Ramazzotti Vineyard Dry Creek Valley (\$42) 89** The 2014 Zinfandel Ramazzotti Vineyard is medium-weight with a dark ruby

color and aromas of black cherry and plum. It has brambly fruit on the palate with good concentration, tannic grip on the mid-palate, and a pleasant finish. A very drinkable wine.

The logo for Williams Selyem features the name "WILLIAMS SELYEM" in a stylized, serif font. Below the name is a decorative flourish or crest.

Williams Selyem (Russian River Valley) The Williams Selyem Winery dates back to 1970 when friends Ed Selyem and Burt Williams began making wine on the weekends in a garage in Forestville in the Russian

River Valley. By the mid-1980s their winery was in full swing, and they released their first vineyard designated wine sourced from the Rocchioli Vineyard. In the ensuing years, success came quickly to the winery, which developed a world wide reputation for its Pinot Noir. Less known are its two excellent Zinfandels. In 1998 John and Kathe Dyson became the owners of the winery, and Jeff Mangahas, formerly of Hartford Court, joined the team in 2011 and is serving as Director of Winemaking. www.williamsselyem.com

Williams Selyem 2014 Bacigalupi Vineyard Russian

River Valley (\$85) 93 Dark ruby in color, the Zinfandel Bacigalupi Vineyard is simply delicious, It offers dark red berry fruit on the nose and a silky mouth feel with pure red fruit flavors. Aged in French oak, it reveals rich earthy red and black fruit flavors and a long persistent finish. A wonderful wine from one of Sonoma's top vineyards for Zinfandel. **Williams Selyem 2014 Zinfandel Papera**
Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$65) 91 Opaque ruby. This offering displays aromas of earth and red and blackberry fruit. On the palate it is tightly constructed with black cherry fruit and a light oak overlay. It has good intensity of fruit flavors with a modest finish. More time in the bottle will improve its drinkability. Carlisle Vineyard also sources grapes from this vineyard but picks them much later than Williams Selyem.

The logo for Wonderment Wines features the name "WONDERMENT WINES" in a serif font. Below the name is a small illustration of a unicycle.

Wonderment (Napa Valley) is owned by Stephanie Cook, who is also the winemaker. Stephanie has winemaking experience with Robert Biale, Spottswoode, and Staglin in Napa and with Spy Valley Wines in New Zealand. She sources grapes from some

of California's most special vineyards, including Bacigalupi Vineyard, where she gets her old vine Zinfandel. www.wondermentwines.com

Wonderment 2014 Old Vine Zinfandel Bacigalupi

Vineyard Russian River Valley (\$40) 90 This Old Vine Zinfandel is sourced from a small plot of 60 year-old head-trained vines of the famed Bacigalupi Vineyard. It displays restrained dark fruit aromas of plum, blackcurrant and chocolate. Full-bodied and soft on the attack, it is beautifully balanced with ripe tannins and a persistent

finish. **Wonderment 2014 Zinfandel Rockpile Pritchett's Peaks Vineyard (\$50) 91** Dark ruby with hints of magenta in color, this Zinfandel block in the Pritchett Peaks Vineyard offers a bright, fruit forward wine exhibiting black cherry and cola on the nose followed by subtle hints of anise and currant. The wine finishes with notes of ripe berries and cedar. **Wonderment 2013 Zinfandel Old Vines Burton Ranch Vineyard Lake County (\$35) 91** This Lake County Zinfandel displays briary raspberry and plum aromas. It also has attractive spicy mocha flavors on the palate and is reasonably well balance with firm round tannins, and a long finish.

Annex 1 Major Wine Appellations in California



Annex 2 Old Zinfandel Vineyards of California

Zinfandel was king in California in the 19th and early 20th century, and fortunately, many of the best vineyards planted at that time have survived. Some, planted on sandy soils, survived phylloxera. Others were planted on St. George rootstock shortly after that epidemic was over. These vineyards are almost all head trained and mostly dry farmed. Their yields are low, and most growers could earn more by replacing these old vines with new ones. Their survival is due to dedicated growers, many of whom have farmed the same vineyards for multiple generations.

In this annex we give a partial listing of the best known, old Zinfandel¹ vineyards in the state². We put in parentheses after each listing the names of wineries that we know of that use the fruit. The listings are organized by county, except for San Bernardino County, which has one well known, old vineyard, the Lopez Vineyard, planted in 1918 to self-rooted Zinfandel in the Cucamonga Valley with pygmy vines and tiny half ton per acre yields. Don Galleano owns the vineyard, and Carol Shelton makes a Cucamonga Zinfandel from the vineyard.

Sonoma County

Gillsson Vineyard is 18 acres of 53 year old vines located in the Chalk Hill AVA. It's head pruned and farmed sustainably. [V Sattui]

Riebli Valley Vineyard has 100+ year old, dry farmed Zinfandel on St. George rootstock. The vineyard is currently owned by Jim and Barbara Emmons, who purchased it in 1976. [DeLoach]

St. Peter's Church is a two acre, Zinfandel vineyard planted in the 1880s. It's located in back of St. Peter's Church in Cloverdale. It's still owned by the parish and farmed by Ullysses Valdez. [Rosenblum, Jeff Cohn, Rock Wall]

Zampatti Vineyard is a small, 2.5 acre, organically cultivated vineyard planted in 1915 by the Zampatti family. It's still farmed by their granddaughter, Alida Morzenti. It is located in the new Fountain Grove AVA. [Turley]

Alexander Valley

Big River Ranch is a 14 acre vineyard planted about 1893 and is currently owned by Scott and Lynn Adams. It's now one of Bella Winery's estate vineyards. [Ravenswood]

Fredson Ranch/Carmichael lies adjacent to Ridge Vineyard's Geysersville vineyard. It includes 7.2 acres of mixed Zinfandel planted in the early 1900s by E. Carmichael.. [Ridge]

Geysersville's Whitton Ranch is Ridge's Alexander Valley estate vineyard on the western edge of Alexander Valley. It has an old patch section of vines more than 130 years old. It's a mixed black vineyard led by Zinfandel, and Ridge has made a single site Zinfandel since 1966. [Ridge]

Home Ranch was planted in the 1890s by Edoardo Seghesio. It's one of Seghesio's estate vineyards today. [Seghesio]

Mazzoni Home Ranch Vineyard was planted by Giuseppe Mazzoni and Abramo Trusendi who planted 9.6 acres of Zinfandel and mixed blacks in 1900. [Ridge]

Nervo Ranch (Geysersville) is a vineyard of mixed blacks planted in 1896 on a steep incline in Alexander Valley on a unique outcropping of decomposed shale and was used for Nervo Winery's California Burgundy. It includes Zinfandel, Grenache, Petite Sirah, Negrette and other varieties. [Bedrock]

Sausal Ranch is a 5 acre vineyard planted to Zinfandel in 1877 and is currently owned by Silver Oak Vineyards. [Sausal]

Todd Brothers Ranch has head trained Zinfandel planted in red volcanic soil on steep hillsides. Planted in 1958. [Dashe]

Dry Creek Valley

Coffaro is a 10 acre vineyard planted in the 1890s, mostly to Zinfandel, which is head trained and drip irrigated. David Coffaro is the current owner. [Coffaro]

Forchini Vineyard has 10 acres of old vine Zinfandel. It was planted on St. George rootstock by Mark Kelley in 1905. It's head pruned and dry farmed. [Frei]

Gold Mine Ranch was planted to Zinfandel in 1914 by Charlie Derrick in the hills of the southwest corner of Dry Creek Valley. It's dry farmed and organically cultivated by Jan Mettler. [Carlisle]

¹ As noted in the text, there is some consensus that "old vine" Zinfandel should be defined as vines 50 or more years old, i.e., planted by 1967. The vineyards listed here have blocks or parcels that meet this criterion.

² Information for this Annex comes from our own visits to many of the old vineyards of Sonoma, Lodi and the Sierra Foothills as well as the web site of the Historic Vineyard Society and the very informative web sites of several wineries that specialize in making wines from old vines, including Bedrock, Carlisle, Carol Shelton, Ravenswood, Ridge and Turley. Planting dates should be taken with a grain of salt, except for the information independently verified by the Historic Vineyard Society.

Henderlong Ranch was planted in the 1920s by Frank Henderlong whose descendant Pauline Henderlong now farms it. It's head trained with 2.8 acres of old dry farmed vines and 1.3 acres of younger (planted 1954) drip-irrigated vines. [Nalle, Seghesio]

Louvau Vineyard has old Zinfandel vines planted around 1900. [Dashe]

Lytton Springs Vineyard, owned and farmed by Ridge Vineyards, has predominantly Zinfandel vines planted as early as 1901. The vineyard has 59 acres of old vines in a 220 acre vineyard. [Ridge]

Maple Vineyard has 2 acres of mixed Zinfandel planted in 1910 and another 1.6 acres planted in 1940, all head trained. Owned by Tina and Tom Maple since 1988. [Gary Farrell]

Ray Teldeschi Ranch has an old block of Zinfandel planted in the 1880s and is located adjacent to the Teldeschi Ranch owned by John and Caterina Teldeschi. Joe Swan worked with the fruit in the 1970s. [Carlisle, Vie]

Roost Vineyard sits in the lower hills of the east side of Dry Creek Valley. The Zinfandel vines were planted in the mid-20th century. [Laura Michael]

Teldeschi Ranch is a block of 120 year old vines on the east side of Dry Creek Valley. Joel Peterson began using it for Ravenswood in 1984. Today, Bedrock's Lorenzo's Heritage comes from Teldeschi as does Once and Future's Franks Block Zinfandel. [Ravenswood, Bedrock, Once and Future]

Russian River Valley

Alegria Vineyards is a Zinfandel field blend (78% Zinfandel) with some vines dating back to 1890. [Acorn]

Bacchi Ranch was planted in 1909 at the northern end of Russian River Valley. Dry farmed, it's predominantly Zinfandel with some Grand Noir and Alicante Bouschet. [Carlisle]

Banfield Ranch was originally planted in 1870 and replanted after phylloxera. It was purchased by Giuseppe Martinelli in 1903. It was later subdivided with this portion purchased by the McWilliams Family of Arista Winery. It has 5 acres of old vines, all Zinfandel. [Carlisle]

Belloni Vineyard was planted about 1900. Italian immigrants Ricardo and Natalia Belloni purchased the 75 acre old blacks vineyard in 1971, and the family still cares for it. [Ravenswood]

Carlisle Vineyard, previously known as Pelletti, was planted in 1934 by Alcide Pelletti on the eastern bench of the Laguna de Santa Rosa flood plain and is owned today by Mike Carlisle. It's about 90% Zinfandel with 40 other

varieties. [Carlisle, Bedrock]

Dina's Vineyard was planted by the Arata family more than 100 years ago. Ten acres remain of dry-farmed, mostly head-trained Zinfandel planted 8x8. [Hartford]

Dolinsek Ranch is a 1910 vineyard planted on sandy Goldridge loam soils by the Frati family. The old vines section of the vineyard is about 6 acres on a north facing slope. It's a mix of Zinfandel (about 70%), Barbera, Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, and other varieties with tiny yields of just 0.5 ton/acre. It's one of the last vineyards picked each year due to its northerly orientation. It was formerly known as the Frati Ranch and Joe Swan used to source his Zinfandel from here. [Bedrock, Portalupi]

Fanucchi-Wood Road Vineyard is seven acres of 100+ year old Zinfandel vines, dry farmed and head trained by the Fanucchi family for the past 40 years. [Hartford]

Fava Ranch is on the west side of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. It was planted on Goldridge soils between 1907 and 1922 by the Fava brothers.

Giovanetti Vineyard was planted in the 1890s by Miro and Basrtholomei Giovanetti. It's mostly Zinfandel and currently owned by descendants of the original owners. [St. Francis]

Highwire Vineyard is over 100 years old and half head trained and half trained on a high wire trellis that vineyard owner Lloyd Chelli adopted to permit sun exposure and more even ripening. [Hartford]

Jackass Hill was planted by Giuseppe Martinelli on a non-terraced 60-65° slope in the late 1880s. The vineyard is still owned and cultivated by the family. [Martinelli]

Limerick Lane Vineyard was planted by Mario Del Fava in 1910 and rehabilitated by its current owner, Jake Bilbro. It's located 3 miles south of Healdsburg. [Bedrock, Carlisle, Limerick Lane]

Maffei Vineyard was planted by Umberto and Maria Maffei in the 1920s. The Maffei family still owns it. It's mostly Zinfandel with some Petite Sirah. [Hartford, Seghesio, Gary Farrell, Sunce]

Mancini Vineyard was planted in 1922 by Lucca Mancini. It has 20 acres of head trained, dry farmed vines planted on the eastern side of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. The mixed black block is mostly Zinfandel with 20 other varieties and with yields ranging 1-1.5 tons/acre. [Carol Shelton, Carlisle]

Martinelli Road Vineyard was planted by the Banfield family in the 1880s. It's 5 acres of almost pure Zinfandel. They sold it to Giuseppe Martinelli in 1903. [Martinelli, Arista, Carlisle]

Montafi Ranch was planted in 1926 by Bernardo Montafi. Mostly Zinfandel, it borders the Santa Rosa city limits. [Carlisle, Seghesio]

Papera Ranch was planted in 1934 by Charlie Papera. Most of the blocks are pure Zinfandel, but Bedrock makes its wine from a block of mixed blacks. [Bedrock, Carlisle, Novy, William-Selyem]

Saitone Vineyard has 10.7 acres of Zinfandel planted in Santa Rosa in 1895 by Antonio Saitone. It's now farmed by Ulises Valdez. [DeLoach]

Sodini Ranch was planted in 1905 by Giuseppe Sodini. It provided fruit to Marietta Cellars from 1978-2012. Currently owned by Steve Sodini and farmed by Bedrock, which uses some of the fruit for a vineyard designate and some for its Old Vine Zinfandel bottling. [Bedrock, Rochioli]

Sonoma Valley

Barricia Vineyard is a 36 acre vineyard with 6 acres of old Zinfandel vines dating back to 1888. It and Bedrock used to be together as one vineyard. Barbara Olesen and Patricia Herron purchased and renovated the vineyard, and today Mel and Angela Dagovitz are its owners and caretakers. [Ravenswood]

Bedrock Vineyard has 35 acres of old vines, one of California's largest old vine blocks. Located on what is known as the Agua Caliente bench, Bedrock has alluvial soils with lots of sandy gravel. Founded in 1854, it was replanted in 1888 by Senator George Hearst. Today it's owned by Joel and Morgan Pteerson. The list of producers making wines from this vineyard is a who's who of California Zinfandel: Carlisle, Ridge, Turley, Dashe, Limerick Lane, Once and Future, Windgap, Ravenswood, Bedrock, etc. Ridge uses the name Hooker Creek for its Bedrock Zinfandel.

Fredericks Vineyard was planted in 1937 at 900' on the Sonoma side of the Mayacamas by the Weiss family. The 20 acres of vines are planted along steep, contoured terraces. Sebastiani bought the fruit from here for 50+ years. [Turley]

Kunde Century Vines in Kenwood has 30 acres of 140 year old Zinfandel vines planted in 1879 by James Shaw with some interplanting done about 20 years ago. This is the source of Kunde's Heritage clone. The Kunde family purchased this vineyard from the Shaw family in 1904.

Monte Rosso Vineyard lies on the red (hence, its name) volcanic soils of Mt. Veeder. It's 350 acres planted at 2000' altitude in the 1890s and is one of California's vineyard treasures with a distinct terroir that puts its imprint on its wines. It has about 40 acres of old mixed blacks planted by Emmanuel Goldstein. It was later acquired by Louis Martini and is now owned by Gallo; numerous wineries have made Zinfandel from here, including

Bedrock, Biale, Carlisle, and many others. Beginning in 2017 Gallo will keep the fruit for itself. [Bedrock, Biale, Carlisle, Rock Wall]

Old Hill Ranch was founded in 1856 by William McPherson Hill, and the 14 acre vineyard was planted to 26 different varieties around 1880. Otto Teller took on the job of resuscitating it in 1981, and his son Will Bucklin cares for it today. Farmed organically, yields are a miserly 1.5 tons/acre. [Ravenswood, Bucklin]

Pagani Ranch, located in Kenwood, is a 30 acre Zinfandel field blend with one parcel planted by Felice Pagani in the 1880s on Lenoir rootstock and another, adjacent to Hwy 12, planted in the 1914. Today the vineyard is tended to by the 4th generation of the Pagani family. Bedrock makes its Heritage Wine from here. [Bedrock, Biale, Carlisle, Ridge, Seghesio]

Puccini Vineyard in Glen Ellen was planted in 1906. It's just 1 acre of mostly Zinfandel plus other varieties like Alicante Bouschet and Flame Tokay surrounded by a rock wall. [Bedrock]

Rossi Ranch is 9 acres of Zinfandel and some Mataro and Alicante Bouschet planted by Carlo Rossi in 1910. [Carlisle]

Shaw Vineyard on the Kunde estate was planted in 1882. It's head trained and dry farmed. German immigrant Louis Kunde purchased the vineyard in the early 20th century. [Kunde]

Valsecchi Vineyard was planted around 1900 and later purchased by a Swiss immigrant named John Valsecchi. His grandson Ron Mick now farms it. It's one of the few Zinfandel vineyards in the Carneros appellation. It's also part of the Sonoma Valley appellation. [Biale]

Napa

Aldo's Vineyard was planted by Gaginni in 1937 in Oak Knoll. The head trained, dry farmed 6 acre vineyard is today cared for by Bob Biale. [Biale]

Beatty Ranch, located 1800' above the valley floor in the Howell Mountain appellation, was planted to Zinfandel in the early 1900s; Biale sources fruit from a 1 acre parcel planted in 1914. It's currently owned by Mike Beatty. [Biale, Vie]

Black Sears Vineyard is located on Howell Mountain at 2400' altitude. It has 17 acres of dry-farmed, biodynamically cultivate Zinfandel planted on St. George rootstock in 1975. [Turley, T-Vine, V. Sattu]

Dickerson Vineyard was planted by Charlie Volpi in the 1920s just before Prohibition. Dr. William Dickerson purchased and preserved the vineyard. Dickerson was one of Ravenswood's first vineyard designates. [Ravenswood]

Falleri (Calistoga) was planted by Argentina Falleri at the base of Mount St. Helena in 1920. Argentina's granddaughter, Sonya Spencer, now tends the vineyard, which consists of just 300 vines. [Biale]

Grande Vineyard was planted on Silverado Trail by Theodosio Grande in the 1920s. His daughter, Dorothy Rossi, still cares for the 4 acre, organically farmed vineyard. [Biale]

Hayne Vineyard is a head-trained, dry farmed 19 acre Zinfandel vineyard planted in 1902-3 on St. George rootstock on the west side of St. Helena and owned by the Hayne family. [Turley, Chase]

Korte Ranch Vineyard, located in the St Helena AVA, has 35 acres of vines. Its old parcel was planted in the 1890s to Zinfandel. It's currently owned by Jack and Kathy Pagendarm, 4th generation family members. [Elyse, D-Cubed Cellars, Ehlers Estate]

Mead Ranch is at 1600' on Atlas Peak volcanic red soils on the southeastern side of Napa Valley. The vineyard was originally planted in the 1880s, but Turley sources fruit from a head-trained block planted in the 1970s. [Turley]

Old Kraft Vineyard, located west of St. Helena, was restored by owners Bill and Margie Hart. It was originally planted in the 1890s by German immigrant winemaker, Franz Kraft. [Biale]

Oakville Farmhouse, the oldest vineyard left in Oakville, is a small, 2.5 acre parcel of mixed blacks planted in the 1880s at the southern edge of Napa's To Kalon Vineyard. It includes, Negrette, Zinfandel, Mondeuse, Petite Sirah, Carignanee, and Ruby Cabernet. [Bedrock]

RW Moore Vineyard (formerly Earthquake Vineyard) was planted to Zinfandel on 8x8 spacing in 1905; Bill Moore bought the Coombsville property and 10 acre old vineyard in 1983. The RW Moore clone (FPS 25) is one of the most successful in the UC Davis Zinfandel Heritage Vineyard Project. [Biale, Hendry]

Tofanelli Vineyard has old vine Zinfandel blocks dating back to 1930. The vines were planted by the DiGuilio family, and the same family continues to farm it. The vineyard is organic, dry farmed, and head trained. [Christian Brothers, BV Cellars, Inglenook]

Varozza is a 1.25 acre vineyard on Pratt Ave in St. Helena that was planted in 1960 and is farmed by 3rd generation grower, Jack Varozza.

Mendocino

Mattern Ranch was planted around 1930 on the Talmage bench, southeast of Ukiah. It's certified organic and biodynamic. [Cesar Toxqui, Marr, Martella]

Piffero Vineyard, located in the Redwood Valley AVA, was planted in 1930 by Vitorio Piffero planted. Now 25 acres, it's dry farmed, head pruned and tended to by Ric Piffero. [Edmeades]

Contra Costa

Big Break Vineyard is owned by Cline Cellars and is dry farmed, head pruned and over 100 years old. It's situated on deep, sandy soils between the San Joaquin River and a Eucalyptus grove that can contribute a minty flavor to the grapes. [Cline]

Bridgehead Vineyard, a 100+ year old vineyard adjacent to Bridgehead Road in Oakley, is dry farmed and head pruned and grown on deep sandy soil. It's currently owned by Cline Cellars. [Cline]

Evangelho Vineyard is a 36 acre, self rooted vineyard planted in the 1890s near the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and owned and managed by Frank Evangelho until April of this year when it was purchased by Morgan Twain-Peterson of Bedrock Wine Co. It's about 35% Zinfandel planted on deep 40' banks of beach sand. Brother Timothy of Christian Brothers began buying fruit in 1972, followed by Ridge. [Bedrock, Neyers, Precedent, Artezin, Three Wine Co., Dashe, Turley]

Live Oak Vineyard is another of Cline Cellar's very old Zinfandel vineyards. Planted in 1885 by Italian immigrants, it's dry farmed, and head pruned and located next to Live Oak Road. It's predominantly (81%) Zinfandel with some mixed blacks, including Petite Sirah (15%). [Cline, Three Wine]

Mori Vineyard was planted in the 1930s to self-rooted Zinfandel on Delhi sands. It's owned by the Contra Costa County Water District and farmed by Bedrock. [Turley]

Pato Vineyard was planted in the early 1900s to Zinfandel and Mataro. It's owned by the Contra Costa County Water District and farmed by Bedrock. [Bedrock]

Planchon Vineyard was planted in the early 1900s to mostly Zinfandel. It's a 6.6 acre vineyard. [Rosenblum, Cline]

Salvador Vineyard is a self rooted, organically farmed vineyard planted in 1896 on 40' deep sandy soils. [Turley]

Sierra Foothills

Buck Cobb Vineyard is a dry-farmed vineyard planted at 1500' in the Shenandoah Valley. Former fighter pilot Buck Cobb and Karly Cobb previously used the fruit for its Karly Winery, but the vineyard was sold to Turley who produces a single vineyard Zinfandel from the site. [Turley]

Ken Deaver makes wine from 120 year old Zinfandel on his property. The John J. Davis parcel on this estate was planted in the late 1860s and also includes 6 acres of very old Mission grapes; cuttings from the vineyard were used to plant many of Amador's old vineyards. The Trinchero family has been closely tied to this vineyard ever since Bob Trinchero made Amador's first single vineyard Zinfandel from the John J. Davis parcel in 1968. [Terra d'Oro/ Montevina]

Diener Vineyard was planted beginning in 1972 in the Shenandoah Valley. Tom Dillian farms this head trained, dry farmed Zinfandel vineyard. [Rombauer]

Esola Vineyard (formerly known as Sherman's Gold) was planted on granitic soils in the 1910s in the Shenandoah Valley. It was the source of Ridge's Shenandoah Zinfandel in the 1970s and 1980s. Denise Esola is the owner and manager of the vineyard since 2013. [Bedrock; Ridge and Rombauer in the past]

Ferrero Vineyard has 60 acres of old vines planted as early as 1904, making it one of California's largest old vine vineyards. Located in the Shenandoah Valley. [Sobon Estate, Rombauer]

Fox Creek Vineyard was planted in 1947. In 1985 Sue Fox purchased the 60 acre Massoni Ranch from Montevina and renamed it Fox Creek. The Sea of Grapes Vineyard is within Fox Creek and was planted in 1963. [Renwood]

Ghirardelli is located in Valley Spring in Calaveras County and has about 10 acres of Zinfandel, first planted in 1900 on mostly volcanic tufa. The Ghirardelli family still farms it. [Millaire]

Original Grandpere Vineyard (Shenandoah Valley) is owned by Terri Harvey and has been documented as existing in 1869, the oldest Zinfandel vineyard in Amador County. It is distinct from the GrandPere Vineyard, which is owned by Renwood, is not an old vineyard, and is planted with cuttings from the Original Grandpere Vineyard. [Scott Harvey, Macchia]

GrandPere Vineyard is owned by Renwood and is planted with cuttings from the Original Grandpere Vineyard. [Renwood]

Lubenko Vineyard (Fiddletown AVA) was planted in 1910 at 1900' altitude on degraded schist soils. It's self-rooted and head trained. Now owned by the Sobon Winery. [Sobon]

Rinaldi Vineyard (Fiddletown AVA), also called the Eschen Vineyard, is a 70 acre vineyard (35 now in production) planted at 2000'. Some of the vines in the original 38 acre block planted in 1865 remain. Many of the oldest vines in the Eschen block are 100-120 years old. They're head-trained and dry-farmed on gravelly soils. [Easton, Renwood, Rombauer, Turley]

Sadie Upton Vineyard was planted by 21 year old Sadie Upton in 1922 in the northern Shenandoah Valley at 1500'. Karly Wines made wines exclusively from this 6 acre vineyard for 30 years. [Turley]

Story Vineyard was planted in 1907 and is now farmed by the Borjon family. It's head-trained, dry-farmed and self-rooted. Turley makes his Judge Bell Zinfandel from the Picnic Hill block. [Turley, Renwood, Borjon]

Lodi

Dogtown Vineyard (Clement Hills AVA) was planted in 1944 on clay and volcanic soils in the Clement Hills AVA. Larry Turley has leased and farmed this head trained, self-rooted vineyard for the past 20 years. [Turley]

Royal Tee Vineyard/Jessie's Grove Estate is Lodi's oldest continuously farmed Zinfandel and mixed blacks parcel. Planted in 1889 by German immigrant Joseph Spenker from cuttings supplied by Stockton Zinfandel pioneer George West, today it's owned and farmed by his descendants, Wanda Woock Bechtold and her son Greg Burns, who manages the Jessie's Grove Winery. It provides the fruit for Greg La Follette's Ancient Vine Zinfandel.

Katusha's Vineyard (Mokelumne River AVA) was planted between 1915 and 1920 and is located across the street from the Kirschenmann Vineyard. It's owned and farmed by Morgan Twain-Peterson of Bedrock.

Kirschenmann Vineyard (Mokelumne River AVA) has ungrafted vines planted in 1915 in white, chalky sandy soils. It's owned and farmed by Tegan Passalacqua, winemaker for Turley. [Turley]

Lizzy James is a parcel of vines planted in 1904 and interplanted in the 1970s. It belongs to Kyle Lerner, and winemaker Chad Joseph makes a single vineyard parcel Zinfandel from Lizzy James for Lerner's Harney Lane Winery.

Marian's Vineyard is an 8.3 acre self-rooted vineyard parcel originally planted in 1901 in Lodi's Mokelumne River AVA on deep sandy loam soil. It's part of the much larger Mohr-Fry Ranches vineyard holdings, which includes several parcels of Zinfandel planted in the 1940s. Stuart Spencer's St. Amant Winery has made a single vineyard Marian's Zinfandel since 2001.

Rous Vineyard Planted on St. Georges rootstock in 1909, Rous is one of the first grafted vineyards in Lodi. Owned by Craig Rous, several single vineyard Zinfandels are crafted from this vineyard, including the ones Steve Millier makes for Ironstone, Time Holdener makes for Machia, and Mike McKay's Macchia

Soucie Vineyard has head trained, self rooted vines planted in 1916. Cool breezes from the Sacramento Delta are said to give the Zinfandels here an earthy, terroir character. Located on the far west side of Lodi near the

Delta sloughs where the sandy soil is shallow and richer in organic matter, Soucie is owned and farmed by Kevin Soucie. Layne Montgomery's m2 Vintners' Zinfandels are made from Soucie fruit, and Mike McCay's 2014 Lodi Native Zinfandel was also made with Soucie fruit.

Stampede Vineyard is located in Lodi's Clements Hills AVA. Originally planted in the 1920s with a second planting in the 1940s, the vineyard is all self-rooted with 10x10 spacing. Now owned by Jeff and John Perlegos. Ryan Sherman's Fields Family Wines sources Zinfandel from Stampede.

Paso Robles

Bailey Ranch, located on Peachy Canyon Rd in Paso Robles, is farmed by Pat Bailey and her son David with 9 acres of dry-farmed Zinfandel planted in 1970 and later. [Lone Madrone, Peachy Canyon] .

Benito Dusi Ranch has 40 acres of dry farmed, head pruned Zinfandel, some as old as 80 years located on the east side of Highway 101 in Paso Robles. The vines are spaced 10x10 and 12x12 on St George rootstock. Ridge purchases Dusi fruit for its Paso Robles Zinfandel.

Dante Dusi Vineyard is 100 acres of Zinfandel planted in 1943 on the west side of Highway 101. Dry farmed and head trained. [J. Dusi Wines, Cypher, Ridge, Turley]

Heaton Vineyard Will's Hills, located 10 miles west of Paso Robles, consists of 23 acres of dry-farmed, head-trained vines spaced 12x12. The Zinfandel fruit is sold to Lone Madrone. Planted in 2004, this is not an old vineyard, but it's cultivated as such.

Klau Mine Vineyard is also not old, planted in 2006 on the Dodd Family Ranch, which has been in the family since 1871. Skip and Raymond Dodd do the farming. It consists of 15 acres of dry farmed, head trained, 12x12 spaced Zinfandel and other varieties. Lone Madrone purchases the Zinfandel for its Dodd wine.

Martinelli Vineyard/Amadeo Vineyard in Templeton was planted in 1921 by Amadeo Martinelli in the 1920s as the estate vineyard for the family-owned Amadeo Martinelli winery. It consists of 9.5 acres of dry farmed, head trained, mostly Zinfandel vines planted 10x10 on an east-facing mountain side and is interplanted with cherry trees. The vineyard is now owned and farmed by Turley. [Turley]

Pesenti Vineyard A 45 acre vineyard planted by Frank Pesenti in 1923 in the Templeton district, the Pesenti Vineyard is famous for its dry-farmed, head-pruned Zinfandel. Today this 45 acre vineyard is owned by Turley, which purchased it in 2000. The vineyard has boxed canyons and a variety of microclimates where 22 different blocks of grapes are grown, including even some old

Mission vines. [Turley]

Pomar Junction Vineyard is a 120 acre vineyard located six miles east of Templeton with calcareous Linne-Calodo soils and cool breezes direct from the Templeton Gap. It's SIP certified. Pomar Junction makes its Zinfandel from this fruit.

Steinbeck Vineyards has 13 different varieties, including Zinfandel, planted on 500 acres. 99 percent of the crop is sold to large producers, but Steinbeck Winery makes an estate Zinfandel from the vineyard. Planted in 1982, it's not technically an old vineyard, but it's a very important, well-managed one in Paso Robles. [Eberle]

Ueberroth Vineyard was planted on a steep hillside in 1885 and is the oldest vineyard in Paso Robles. It is dry farmed and certified organic with self-rooted Zinfandel planted in limestone soils. Yields are about 1.5 tons/acre. Turley makes a single vineyard Ueberroth Zinfandel.

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