

Old Vine 1999 Zinfandel

Dry Creek Valley Buchignani Vineyard

Vineyard and Vintage: Dry Creek Valley in Sonoma County is the premier appellation for Zinfandel, a varietal unique to California. The Buchignani family pioneered grape farming here, planting this vineyard just after WWII. These dry-farmed, gnarled old vines produce sparse bunches of incredibly flavorful fruit. Unlike most other varietals, old Zins ripen unevenly, challenging the talents of the winemaker. We often get under- and overripe fruit on the same bunch. 1999 was an excellent growing season with a long, dry Autumn and ideal ripening conditions, similar to 1997.

The Wine: Hand picked and sorted, the grapes were crushed leaving almost 40% whole berries. During fermentation whole berries help retain the fruit essences that soften the effect of the high alcohol. Fermented in open-top tanks, they were punched down by hand three times-a-day for the 14 days on the skins. Temperature was allowed to peak at 90°F to extract maximum color and tannin. The yeast was chosen for its tolerance to alcohol and its ability to bring out the roundness of the berry flavors of Zinfandel. The wine was aged in French and American oak barrels for sixteen months, topped every other week and racked 5 times.

Tasting Notes: This is a big, full-bodied Zinfandel. The color is a brilliant, dark garnet. The nose is fruity with nuances of raspberries, blackberries, ripe cherries, chocolate, tobacco, cedar and oak. The promise of the nose carries through to the taste. Nothing is out of place. It is equally elegant yet better balanced than the '97 and bigger than the '98. The berry flavors are beautifully integrated with the oak and the tannins, resulting in a rich explosion of fruit in the middle of the palate. The high alcohol drives the flavor without being hot. The finish is exceptionally long and lingering.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemaker:	Robert Rex, Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, October 3, 1999
Brix at Harvest:	26.3° Brix, soaked up to probably 29° Brix.
Acid at Harvest:	8.3 g/L as Tartaric
pH:	3.76
Yeast:	L2226
Fermentation:	In small, open-top fermentors for 14 days, punched 3 x/day
Max. Fermentation Temp:	90°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100% in barrel
Aging:	20 months in 40% French Oak, 60% American Oak, 36% new overall
Fining:	2 fresh egg whites/barrel
SO ₂ at Bottling:	14 ppm free
Bottled:	380 cases – June 21, 2001
Alcohol:	16.5%
Residual sugar:	0.12%
Released:	January 1, 2002
Awards & Reviews:	Two Silver medals in national competitions

For more information contact:

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