



Perlis Picks: Dry Creek Valley on Tour

By Michael Perlis, March 26, 2016

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Last week's article wrapped up our day in Dry Creek Valley. Before moving on to our last day in Sonoma County [finally, right?] I wanted to interrupt the regularly scheduled programming with a great event that happened recently in Los Angeles involving the Dry Creek Valley.

On February 20th, 2016, the Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley took their show on the road. Dry Creek Valley On Tour, along with Ian Blackburn's Wine LA, hosted a very appreciative crowd of wine lovers, including my wife Karen and me, at Smashbox Studios in Culver City.

Now if anybody knows how to put on a great event it is Ian, and the WDCV couldn't have picked a better partner to help showcase all the Dry Creek Valley has to offer.



Of the more than 60 wineries in the Dry Creek, which is just outside of Healdsburg in Sonoma County, twenty of them made the trip south to share a great sampling of what has become one of my favorite wine regions, especially for zinfandel:

32 Winds Wine

Amista Vineyards

Bella Vineyards

Cast Wines

Collier Falls

Comstock Wines

DaVero Farms & Winery

Dry Creek Vineyard

Dutcher Crossing Winery

Ferrari-Carano

Frick Winery

Fritz Underground Winery

Mazzocco Winery

Mounts Family Winery

Pedroncelli Winery

Quivira Vineyards

Rued Wines

Sbragia Family Vineyards

Seghesio Family Vineyards

Wilson Winery

The event started at noon for the VIP ticket holders.

[Note to readers: WineLA events typically include General Admission tickets and VIP tickets. The VIP option provides early entry and other benefits. When possible, I recommend you go for the VIP experience, although if you opt for General Admission you won't be disappointed either.]

The VIP portion started with the Hog Island Oysters traveling oyster bar on the studio patio, with a selection of white wines being poured by participating wineries. I like oysters but am not an aficionado. Karen is from Boston and knows whereof she speaks – she said they were excellent. Some of our favorite wines with the oysters were the Frick Winery 2013 Grenache Blanc, Comstock Wines 2014 Sauvignon Blanc and Cast Wines Sparkling Blanc de Noirs.

We then went back into the main tasting area, where Ian presented information about the event as well as talked about the beneficiary of the silent auction proceeds – the T.J. Martell Foundation, which raises funds for cancer, leukemia and AIDS research. [Just another reason to attend WineLA's events.]

As more food was served [thanks to Chef Bob Blumer, Baby Blues BBQ, One World Beef and Cowgirl Creamery], writer Dan Dunn [whose book American Wino is due out in April] interviewed a few of the winemaking luminaries in attendance, including:

Clay Fritz of Fritz Underground Winery

Diane Wilson of Wilson Winery

Joe Healy of Bella Vineyards

Julie Pedroncelli of Pedroncelli Winery

Tim Bell of Dry Creek Vineyard

And the legendary Ed Sbragia of Sbragia Family Vineyards.

Just as our thirst for wine could wait no longer, the grand tasting was opened to the VIP tasters in advance of access by the general admission ticket holders. The added benefit to early access was the opportunity to sample limited quantities of "special" wines that the wineries had brought down from the Dry Creek Valley. Plus, with most wineries having winemakers in attendance, there was ample opportunity to have one-on-one time with them.

With twenty wineries in attendance and each winery pouring from three to six wines, I only tasted at about half the tables, even with the extra time. Of those I tasted, these were my favorites [if a winery isn't listed below, it probably just means I didn't make it to that table; also note that the wines in *bold* were in limited quantities for the VIP tasters, although they were still poured for the general attendees if any was left].

Bella Vineyards

2007 Bella Canyon Zinfandel

2013 Florence Zinfandel

2012 Lily Hill Petite Sirah

Cast Wines

NV Sparkling Bland de Noirs, Sonoma County

2012 Grey Palm Estate Petite Sirah

2013 Grey Palm Estate Zinfandel

2013 Grey Palm Estate Petite Sirah

Collier Falls

2012 Hillside Estate Primitivo

2012 Hillside Estate Cabernet

Comstock Wines

2014 Sauvignon Blanc, Dry Creek Valley

2012 Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley

2013 Zinfandel Old Vines, Dry Creek Valley

Dutcher Crossing Winery

2013 Bernier-Sibary Zinfandel

2012 Taylor Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

Frick Winery

2013 Grenache Blanc, Dry Creek Valley Estate Owl Hill Vineyard

2006 Cinsaut, Dry Creek Valley

2013 Counoise, Dry Creek Valley Estate Owl Hill Vineyard

2013 Mourvedre, Dry Creek Valley Estate Owl Hill Vineyard

Fritz Underground Winery

2012 Reserve Zinfandel

2013 Estate Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley

Mazzocco Winery

2013 West Dry Creek Zinfandel

2013 Smith Orchard Reserve Zinfandel

Pedroncelli Winery

2004 Mother Clone Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley

2014 Dry Rose of Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley

2012 Wisdom Cabernet Sauvignon, Dry Creek Valley

Sbragia Family Vineyards

2006 Gino's Vineyard Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley

2012 La Promessa Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley

Wilson Winery

2011 Sawyer Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley

2013 Sydney Petite Sirah, Estate Grown, Dry Creek Valley

2013 Nolan Zinfandel, Estate Grown, Dry Creek Valley

Usually at a tasting like this, I try to pick a favorite wine that really stood out for me. This time, the winner was...I can't...I just can't do it. There were so many great wines at this tasting. I did have some takeaways though:

I was surprised at how well the older wines, especially the zinfandels, were showing. It really belied the conventional wisdom that zins should be consumed young.

And while I've always been a fan of Dry Creek zins, I developed a new appreciation for the cabernet from the region.

Attending tastings that focus on specific areas, especially ones as well run as this, can really expose the wine lover to what a wine region is all about – a great way to expand your palate in a short period of time.

The Dry Creek Valley is producing some amazing wines. If you missed this event, don't despair. Passport to Dry Creek Valley is happening April 23 and 24th. Go to drycreekvalley.org and get your tickets now!

<http://evewine101.com/2016/03/26/perlis-picks-dry-creek-valley-on-tour/>