



The Daily Meal®

All Things Food & Drink

Sonoma County's Dry Creek Valley, Tons More than Zinfandel

Dry Creek Valley wines over-deliver

By Gabe Sasso, October 8, 2015

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Some of the best zinfandels in the world come from Dry Creek Valley in the heart of Sonoma County. In fact, Dry Creek Valley has so much good zinfandel that it's basically their calling card along with sauvignon blanc. But there are lots of other grapes that have been thriving in Dry Creek Valley for years. Here's a look at some current releases from a handful of producers in Dry Creek Valley.

These wines only scratch the surface of what Dry Creek Valley has to offer. This incredibly beautiful part of Sonoma County is loaded with family owned wineries

making an array of lovely wines. If your travels take you to Northern California, Dry Creek Valley should be high on your list of wine regions to visit.

It's a friendly, charming, and striking area loaded with terrific wine. When you taste wine in Dry Creek Valley, more often than not one of the owners will be on hand to greet you, tell you their story, and share their latest releases.

There's a sense of community and camaraderie in Dry Creek Valley that isn't found in every wine region of California. So if you can make it there, you definitely should! Of course you can alternately head on over to your favorite fine wine shop and pick up some of the many great Dry Creek Valley offerings, or order directly from most of the producers web sites. Either way, Drink Dry Creek!

Amista Vineyards

I've had the opportunity to visit Amista a few times. It maintains a welcoming room with a nice array of wines. They host terrific parties for their wine club members and really embrace the meaning of their name.

Sparkling Blanc de Blanc, \$40

This wine is composed entirely of Estate grown chardonnay using the classic method. White flower, citrus and yellow melon aromas emerge on the lovely nose. The beautiful palate is studded with citrus such as

lemon ice, other yellow fruits, spice and hints of crème fraîche. Bits of tangerine, biscuit, and yeast are all present on the above average finish.

Comstock Winery

This brand new producer is one I haven't had the chance to visit yet, in fact these are the first wines from them I've sampled. Based on them, I can't wait to taste more of their releases and check out their tasting room on my next visit to Dry Creek Valley.

2012 Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel, \$36

Comstock's zinfandel was produced entirely from zinfandel sourced in Dry Creek Valley. Aging took place over 11 months in a combination of new and used French oak. Black raspberry, bay leaf, and vanilla aromas lead the welcoming nose, bramble and briar characteristics are in play as well. The proportionate palate is strewn with lots of dark, jam laden fruit flavors. Black flavors lead the charge, but red fruits peek in too. Black cherry, blackberry, and continued raspberry elements are all part of the long and persistently complex finish. Bits of chocolate sauce provide a final, delicious coda. This is a lovely example of Dry Creek Valley zin.

Dry Creek Vineyard

Dry Creek Vineyard is the place where it all started for this region in modern times. Founder Dave Stare realized how well sauvignon blanc would flourish there and was the first to plant it in the valley. Some years later he initiated getting Dry Creek valley recognized as an AVA.

2013 Heritage Vines Zinfandel, \$16

This wine is a blend of zinfandel (76 percent), Petite Sirah (21 percent), Primitivo (two percent), and Carignane (one percent). Aging took place over 15 months in French, Hungarian, and American oak. Berry jam compote aromas drift convincingly from the nose of this zinfandel. The palate is stuffed with blackberry, raspberry, spices, and vanilla bean flavors. Chicory, dusty chocolate, and black pepper spice are all part of the finish. This wine is an incredibly dependable value year after year. It provides tons of pure zinfandel character wrapped in a well-balanced package. Easily one of the top 10 value zins one vintage after another.

Dutcher Crossing

Dutcher Crossing has been an excellent Dry Creek Valley producer from the moment Debra Mathy took the reins. Along with winemaker Kerry Damskey they've led the charge on a host of exciting wines. Among them, hands down the best version of zinfandel produced from the famed Maple Vineyard.

2014 Winemakers' Cellar Grenache Rosé, \$23

This dry rosé is composed of grenache. Wild strawberry aromas emerge on the nose here along with bits of Cherry Jolly Rancher. Stone fruit flavors such as peach and apricot join in on the palate along with red berry fruit. Bits of spice lead the crisp finish which shows off crisp, racy acid. This is a nice rosé that's incredibly easy to drink.

Frick Winery

These wines are just a couple of the reasons that Frick made our list of Best Wineries in America. Bill Frick has been getting it done in an impressive manner for years. A visit to his tasting room is akin to taking a class in all things Rhône. It doesn't hurt that he's one of the nicest guys on top of it all.

2012 Cinsault, \$26

Only seven acres of cinsault are planted in all of Sonoma County. It was aged for 22 months in 59 gallon casks. Black raspberry and wild strawberry aromas light up the gorgeous and welcoming nose. The even keeled, proportionate, and substantial palate is loaded with gorgeous red and black fruit flavors. Sour cherry, a bevy of spices, and mineral elements emerge on the impressive finish. As with all of Bill Frick's wines, this cinsault is a food lover's dream.

Geyser Peak Winery

Geyser Peak Winery has been a long-time resident of Sonoma County. Recently this producer found a new home in Dry Creek Valley. I'm looking forward to seeing their new digs and watching them settle in to DCV. Hopefully it'll lead to more wines made from Dry Creek fruit.

2014 Dry Creek Valley Sauvignon Blanc, \$22

Produced exclusively from Dry Creek Valley fruit, only 125 cases of this wine were bottled. Hints of grass and grapefruit aromas lead the inviting nose. Pear, citrus, and a bit of white peach are in play on the palate, which is well balanced and gentle in nature. Lemon curd and white pepper elements are on the soft, lush finish.

Martorana

I haven't spent a significant amount of time at this winery, but I've enjoyed their releases over the years when I've had the opportunity to taste them. Being a big fan of good, dry rosé I was particularly excited to taste this release and it didn't disappoint.

2013 Chardonnay, \$28

This offering is produced exclusively from Estate chardonnay. Orchard fruit and a gentle wisp of smoke emerge on the nose. The weighty palate is studded with all manner of fruit, stone, orchard, and more. A who's who of spices and mineral elements are present as well. The avalanche of fruit flavors continues through the finish where pineapple and guava flavors emerge and are joined by bits of limestone.

Mounts Family Winery

As long time growers the Mounts have been part of Dry Creek Valley for many years. In the last decade they have also emerged as a terrific producer of honest, Dry Creek Wines. A visit to Mounts is just like their wines, an honest slice of Dry Creek Valley.

2013 Verah Blanc, \$28

This Rhône inspired wine is composed of roussanne (38 percent), viognier (38 percent), grenache blanc (eight percent), Picpoul Blanc (eight percent), and Marsanne (eight percent). It was fermented and aged in a combination of once used French oak and concrete. Papaya, mango, and quince aromas burst from the nose with conviction. White peach and apricot flavors are part of the mouth-filling palate. All of those fruit flavors along with a bit of toasted hazelnut are in evidence on the finish which also shows off a bit of creamed honey. This easy to drink and hard to put down wine has an absolutely stunning mouthfeel.

2012 Verah Noir, \$35

This red, Rhône-style selection blends together syrah (40 percent), grenache (40 percent), and mourvèdre (20 percent). Aging took place over 20 months in one- and two-year-old French oak. Red cherry and plum aromas lead the gorgeous nose. Raspberry, boysenberry, and bits of kirsch liqueur fill the substantial palate. Hints of smoked meat, black pepper, and continued lush, red fruit flavors fill out the above average finish.

Pedroncelli Winery

The first time I ever visited Dry Creek Valley in the early 90's I was on a mission to check out Pedroncelli. I'd had one of their wines back home in N.J. and I needed to see where it was made. Over all these years they have remained consistent producers of really nice wines that are affordable for everyday drinking. They also remain a terrific and classic (since 1927) Dry Creek Valley destination. If you've been to Dry Creek Valley but didn't visit Pedroncelli, you haven't really been to Dry Creek.

2013 Pinot Noir, \$20

The fruit for this wine was sourced in the Russian River Valley. It was aged over nine months in French oak. Cherry, strawberry, and light bits of mushroom dot the nose. Those characteristics continue on the palate along with bay leaf and wisps of earth. Hints of cola, and a tiny touch of dusty cocoa mark the solid finish. Here's a great example of a Dry Creek Valley producer reaching outside the appellation and doing a great job making a classic example of Russian River pinot.

For additional Dry Creek Valley Wine reviews head over to Gabe's View.

<http://www.thedailymeal.com/drink/sonoma-county-s-dry-creek-valley-tons-more-zinfandel>