

Tuesday, February 11, 2014

## Dry Creek Valley Field Blend Wines



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Monday, February 10, 2014

## Dry Creek Valley: Ridge Lytton Springs Zinfandel 2011



Field blend wines are those for which various different grape varieties are grown and harvested together, then cofermented. 19th century winemakers found it advantageous to blend the wine in the field, rather than use separate barrels for each grape variety. Today's methods are more expensive, but more flexible. Everyone likes a little nostalgia, though - that's why Throwback Thursday originated.

Located in Sonoma County, Dry Creek Valley's grape history dates back to California's Gold Rush days. The valley is 16 miles long, two miles wide, and sustains 9,000 acres of vineyards. I was supplied with three field blend Zins from Dry Creek Valley for the purpose of a BrandLive virtual tasting event with the winemakers in January 2014. We'll cover the first of the three wines today.

The Twitter-based event attracted a good crowd who

were very complimentary of the wines. Some of the social media wine tasters commented, "For every overblown zin, these are the counter-point. They show how elegant & sophisticated zinfandel can be," "These zins are worth the price," and "These are beautiful wines. Zinfandel was my first love." You can find the Twitter stream by searching [#DCVZin](#), and see the archived video of the three winemakers' comments [here](#).

At [Ridge Vineyards](#), they like to follow what they call the natural process of winemaking with minimal intervention. "When you have great vineyards that produce high-quality grapes of distinct, individual character," it says on their website, "this approach is not only environmentally and socially responsible, it's also the best way to consistently make fine wine."

Lytton Springs is one of the great Ridge estate vineyards. The vines were planted near the turn of the 19th century and Ridge's first vintage from Lytton Springs came in 1972.

It also happens to be a field blend vineyard. The mix of grapes figures out to 82% Zinfandel, 16% Petite Sirah and 2% Carignane, all grown together, hand-harvested together and fermented together. Alcohol hits 14.4% abv, a fairly typical mark - even a bit on the low side - for California Zinfandel. It retails for \$38.

The 2011 growing season featured above average rainfall, a wet spring and no sustained hot spells during the cool summer. This Ridge *Lytton Springs Zinfandel* is aged 14 months in American oak barrels, 25% of which are being used for the first time. Winemaker **John Olney** likes this wine after six months or so of sitting in the rack, although he's more than happy to drink it now.

The Ridge *Lytton Springs Zinfandel 2011* is a very dark colored wine with a very aromatic nose. Dark fruit and oak spice lead the way, with shadings of cinnamon, allspice, vanilla, cedar, anise and tobacco taking turns in the spotlight. Tasting the wine reveals an elegant palate of black cherry, raspberry, spice and a hint of orange tea. The tannins will work with about any type of meat, but it strikes that pork roast would make a great pairing with it. Blue cheese fits it nicely and even a handful of salty pecans works extremely well.

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