



This is America's Most Versatile Wine Grape
It's Zinfandel

By Gabe Sasso



The history of Zinfandel in America can be traced back to Italian Immigrants who planted it all over California for a number of reasons including its hearty nature. For that reason it was also the dominant choice of home winemakers in other parts of the country who were purchasing grapes shipped east from California. For years it was thought that Zinfandel was a genetic descendant of Italy's Primitivo. However genetic testing discovered that both Zinfandel and Primitivo are genetic matches for the Croatian grape Crljenak Kaštelanski.

Over time Zinfandel fell out of favor in comparison to some other varieties and a number of great old vineyards were pulled out. Some were actually saved because they were being used for the production of White Zinfandel. Many of those parcels are now the source of some great Single Vineyard Zinfandels. Old Vines matter for Zinfandel as much as any other grape, and more than most. There are many Zinfandel Vineyards in California over 50 and 100 years old, some dating to the 1800's. When they produce less fruit and struggle somewhat to give what they do, the results are often naturally more intense and layered with character a younger vine simply isn't capable of.

A sense of place is as important for Zinfandel as any grape. Single vineyard Pinot Noirs get a lot more press attention but the truth is that site to site variance for Zinfandel is even more dynamic. Zinfandel thrives in nearly all of California's regions, and brings different characteristics to the forefront depending

on place. While Zinfandel flourishes all over California, there are a few areas few that really raise the flag on what has become the Heritage grape of the Golden State.

Dry Creek Valley – Located in Northern Sonoma County Dry Creek Valley is home to some of the best Zinfandels in the world. A number of multi-generational family producers in Dry Creek Valley are focused on Zinfandel which is their signature red grape. The classic Dry Creek Valley Zinfandels have structure, spice, and proportionate fruit in common. Some of the most famous and well regarded single vineyard parcels of Old Vine Zinfandel call Dry Creek Valley home.

Pedroncelli 2015 Bushnell Vineyards Zinfandel – Dry Creek Valley (\$26)

Black pepper and savory herb aromas underpin raspberry aromas. Blackberry, dark chocolate shavings and a core of spices drive the full flavored and well-proportioned palate. Earth and hints of vanilla close things out. Delicious today this Zin will age gracefully.

Ridge Vineyards 2016 East Bench Zinfandel – Dry Creek Valley (\$32)

Dark fruit aromas and hints of savory herb burst from the glass upon the first whiff. The palate is filled with black raspberry and blackberry accompanied by a nice complement of spices. Wisps of earth are evident on the long finish.

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