

Davis Family Vineyards

2004 Zinfandel, Russian River Valley, Estate Old Vine

Zinfandel is about History. Yes, it is also about those luscious, mouthcoating, berry flavors, layered with spice – but for me Zinfandel also links the past with the present. As many of you know, our vineyards were planted to Zinfandel by the Vanucci Family, the original owners in 1896. This wine comes from those vines, planted 110 years ago. When we bought the vineyard it had been abandoned and overgrown for a dozen years and although much of the vineyard had not survived, (and is now delicious Pinot Noir and Syrah), we were able to nurture, and bring back into production about 2 ½ acres of these amazing old gentlemen. Our label has a crest with a drawing of one of those gnarled old vines. Zinfandel planted in the 1800's was not only our beginning, but really the beginning of the entire California wine industry. Zinfandel is grown almost exclusively here in California – producing 99.9% of all the Zinfandel in the world! Its origins are often debated but the story as I know it goes like this...

Traced to greenhouses on the East Coast as early as 1830 it was believed that Zinfandel was a hybrid of a grape originally brought over from Hungary... In the autumn of 1967 a brilliant American plant pathologist, Dr. Austin Goheen, famous for developing "mist propagation", attended an international symposium in Germany. Before heading home he visited an associate in Puglia, Italy and was served a wine he thought tasted like Zinfandel. The next morning he visited the vineyards and saw grapes and vines that looked exactly like Zinfandel. Local farmers called the grapes "Primativo di Gioia." Dr. Goheen then began a quest to trace the connections, and after taking cuttings from that vineyard, and growing them side by side with Zinfandel here in the US for several years, he found them almost identical. Later Goheen discovered a grape resembling both Zinfandel and Primitivo, dating back to some of the first recorded grape identities, known as "Plavic Mali." - This variety grows on the Dalmatian coast of Yugoslavia, across the Adriatic from Puglia...this is probably where an unknown Hungarian first sourced his vines to be guarded and brought to America. Over time it has adapted well to the "California lifestyle" and developed a personality all its own.

Zinfandel flourished in California through the late 1800's because it grew very well in a wide range of climates, showing a different character in each wine depending on where it was planted. During Prohibition Zinfandel was vigorous enough to survive in many sites that were neglected; and tasty enough to warrant efforts by bootleg and sacrament winemakers to keep it around. In the 70's when the California wine industry was almost bust due to American disinterest in wine, it was Zinfandel in it's "White Zinfandel phase" (a red grape treated like a white grape, creating a blush wine with more sugar than flavor) that saved the industry and hence saved itself from being up-rooted and replanted.

Currently Zinfandel can be found in almost all of the California wine growing regions, always reflecting the personality of its neighborhood. From here in Russian River Valley the style is reflective of our cool coastal influence leaving the wine rich from the abundant sunshine but still bright, what I call "juicy vs. jammy" – more like fresh picked fruit than cooked fruit. It goes well with almost any food because it does not become overly heavy or alcoholic like many of the hotter climate Zins. I love this wine with cheese either before or after the meal...Its also great on its own with just good company too! The old vines only give us enough grapes to make 100 to 200 cases each year, so you,-- our "Friends of the Family" wine club are the only ones that get to try it each year, I love that!... Be it a bottle you have had in the past, one you will have tonight in the present or bottles you stash in your cellar for the future - Zinfandel always has a history of pure pleasure! Happy New Year from our Old Vines -- Enjoy!

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