

Old Vine
1998 Zinfandel
Dry Creek Valley
Buchignani Vineyard

Deerfield Ranch Winery, in the heart of Sonoma Valley at Kenwood, is a 5,000-case winery, specializing in small lots of handmade wines from select vineyards of the California North Coast region. Visitors sample our wines at the *Family Wineries of Sonoma Valley Tasting Room* on Sonoma Highway in Kenwood. Find us on the Web at www.deerfieldranch.com, or call 707 833-5215.

Sonoma County is the premier appellation for Zinfandel, a varietal unique to California. This vineyard was planted just after WWII by the Buchignani family, pioneering Dry Creek Valley grape farmers. These dry-farmed, gnarled, old vines produce sparse bunches of incredibly flavorful grapes. Unlike most other varietals, Zins ripen unevenly, old vines even more so, challenging the talents of the winemaker. We get under- and overripe fruit, not only from the same vine, but from the same bunch. The 1998 season was late starting and late ending. We picked about three weeks later than in '97. The yield was down in '98 compared to '97 and the wines a bit lighter yet more balanced and refined. The '98's are similar to the '96's with a bit more body and character.

The Wine: Hand picked and sorted, these grapes were crushed leaving almost 30% whole berries. Fermented in an open-top tanks, they were manually pushed down three times daily during the 18 days on the skins. The yeast was chosen from experiments we ran in '97. We liked it for its tolerance to alcohol and its ability to bring out the round berry flavors of this Zinfandel. After the new wine was pressed, the primary fermentation continued in the barrel for almost eight months. The wine was aged in French and American oak barrels for sixteen months, topped every other week and racked 5 times. From the beginning, this wine exhibited raspberry aromas and complex tastes that filled the senses and expectations.

Tasting Notes: This is a big, full-bodied Zinfandel. The color is a brilliant, dark garnet. The nose is fruity with nuances of raspberries, blackberries, ripe cherries, chocolate, tobacco, cedar and oak. The promise of the nose is carried through to the taste. Nothing is out of place. It is more elegant and better balanced than the '97 and bigger than the '96. The berry flavors are well-integrated with the oak and the tannins, resulting in a rich explosion of fruit in the middle of the palate. The high alcohol drives the flavor without being hot. The finish is long and lingering. This Zinfandel is great on its own and with rich, red meat, barbecue and chocolate desserts.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemaker:	Robert Rex
Harvested:	By hand, October 11, 1998
Brix at Harvest:	24.4° Brix, soaked up to probably 27° Brix.
Acid at Harvest:	.72 g/100ml as Tartaric
pH:	3.34
Yeast:	L2226
Fermentation:	In small, open-top fermentors for 18 days, punched 3 times/day
Max. Fermentation Temp.:	88°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100% after 11 months in the barrel
Aging:	16 months in 40% French Oak, 60% American Oak, 36% new overall
Fining:	2 fresh egg whites/barrel
SO ₂ at Bottling:	14 ppm free
Bottled:	306 cases – February 15, 2000
Alcohol:	16.2%
Residual sugar:	46mg/100ml = 0.046%
Released:	June 1, 2000
Awards & Reviews:	Not yet reviewed or entered in competition

