

Old Vine 2000 Zinfandel

Dry Creek Valley Buchignani Vineyard

Vineyard and Vintage: Dry Creek Valley in Sonoma County is the premier appellation in the entire world for Zinfandel. Originally from Croatia, named **Crljenak**, it is now uniquely Californian. The Buchignani family pioneered grape farming in the Dry Creek Valley, planting vineyards before Prohibition. This particular vineyard was planted before WWII. These dry-farmed, gnarled old vines produce sparse bunches of incredibly flavorful fruit. Unlike most other varietals, old Zins ripen unevenly, challenging the talents of the winemaker. We often get under- and overripe fruit on the same bunch. The 2000 growing season was excellent for early ripening varietals, such as old vine Zinfandel. Later ripening grapes suffered from an early rainfall.

The Wine: Hand picked and sorted, the grapes were crushed leaving 50% whole berries. During fermentation, whole berries help retain the fruit essences that soften the effect of the high alcohol, like vermouth in a martini. Fermented in open-top tanks, punched down by hand three times daily for 10 days, the temperature was allowed to peak at 96°F to extract maximum color, tannin and glycerin, which help create mouth feel and substantial legs. After the initial 10 days fermentation was slowed for extended maceration of an additional 15 days to soften the tannins and increase complexity. The yeast was chosen for its tolerance to alcohol and its ability to bring out the roundness of the berry flavors of Zinfandel. The wine was aged in French and American oak barrels for 21 months, topped every other week and racked 3 times.

Tasting Notes: This is a big, full-bodied Zinfandel very typical of our previous vintages from this vineyard. The color is a brilliant, dark garnet. The nose is fruity with nuances of raspberries, blackberries, ripe cherries, chocolate, tobacco, cedar and oak. The oak is balanced more toward smoky American oak than before. The tannin is more restrained than the previous vintage. The berry flavors are beautifully integrated with the oak and 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 exceptionally long and lingering. At this writing, January of 2003, the wine is still showing very young. It will profit from an additional year in the bottle. I hope we have some left by then.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemakers:	Robert Rex, Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, September 9, 2000
Brix at Harvest:	25° Brix, soaked up to probably 27° Brix.
Acid at Harvest:	7.9 g/L as Tartaric
pH:	3.40
Yeast:	L2226
Fermentation:	In small, open-top fermenters for 25 days, punched 3 x/day for the first 10 days
Max. Fermentation Temp:	96°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100% in barrel
Aging:	21 months in 40% French Oak, 60% American Oak, 36% new overall
Fining:	none
Filtration:	Screened at bottling
SO ₂ at Bottling:	12 ppm free
Bottled:	368 cases – July 30, 2002
Alcohol:	16.4%
Residual sugar:	0.0%
Released:	January 15, 2003
Awards & Reviews:	Not yet entered or reviewed. Previous vintage awarded two silver medals and rated 91 points by Wine Enthusiast
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