

# 2007 Old Vine Zinfandel

Buchignani/Garcia Vineyard  
Dry Creek Valley

*Reserve*



## *V8 Four on the floor at full throttle*

**The Vineyard:** The Buchignani (“Boo ken ya nee”) family planted this vineyard starting 120 years ago and have been farming it ever since. JoJo Garcia, married to Suzie Buchignani, is the best dry farmer I know. This is very specialized farming that requires tireless effort and a great deal of experience to produce optimal fruit and long living vines. These gnarled old vines produce sparse bunches of incredibly flavorful fruit. Old Zins ripen unevenly, challenging the talents of the grower and winemaker and adding character to the wine. Dry Creek Valley is the best place in the world to grow Zinfandel. We’ve been making Zinfandel from this vineyard for 36 years.

**The Vintage:** 2007 was an exceptional vintage, what we’ve come to think of as normal, and not seen since; no unseasonable rain, no dramatic heat spikes. The 2007 Sonoma wines show good structure and lots of fruit. The picking day was chosen by walking the vineyard every few days until it felt right, from the smell, the look of the fruit, the touch, the taste. It’s a target chosen from experience.

**Winemaking:** We handpicked into small bins so as not to crush the berries. At the winery we sorted out any damaged bunches but sorted less for ripeness than we usually do because these old vines ripen the fruit unevenly. If you pick out all the under-ripe and over ripe berries you disturb the balance in the wine. We’ve learned to trust the vines. The secret in making this wine is whole berry fermentation. We remove the berries from the stems but leave the berries uncrushed. Fermentation on whole berries retains the fruit essences, and allows us to let the temperature during fermentation to peak at 96°F, which extracts maximum color, more flavor, longer tannins, and high glycerin levels, adding to the viscous mouth feel. The whole berries retain compounds that mask the high alcohol, like vermouth in a martini. We start the fermentation on native yeast and finish it on specialized yeast. This is the most difficult wine to make. The fermentation has to be coaxed and often takes several months to finish. It’s always a challenge, but the result is this remarkable wine.

**Élevage:** We use mostly Pennsylvania oak barrels to age the wine, which broadens the front palate. One or two French barrels add aromatics. The wine was racked only once over its four years of aging, longer than any other California Zinfandel. The barrels were topped every three weeks and tasted every other month. 15% of the wine was lost to ullage.

**Taste:** The nose is fruity with nuances of blackberries, ripe cherries, chocolate, tobacco, licorice and oak, with nuances of allspice and cedar. A rich explosion of fruit expands in the middle of the palate. The high alcohol drives the flavor up without a hint of heat. Everything about this wine is intense. The finish is exceptionally long and lingering. This wine can be aged for at least 15 years, maybe 20.

Winemaker: Robert Rex. Harvested: September 9, 2007

Brix at Harvest: 27.7°. Estimated maximum Brix after soak 33°

Acid at Harvest: 5.8 g/L as Tartaric, 1 g/L added. pH 3.60.

Yeast: Started on native yeast and later inoculated with L2226 yeast.

Aging: 42 months in 74% Pennsylvania American Oak, 26% Tonnellarie Bel Air

French Oak, 33% new. Fining: none. Filtration: Cross flow at bottling

SO<sub>2</sub> at Bottling: 22 ppm free, SO<sub>2</sub> at release less than 12 ppm

Bottled: 550 cases – April 20, 2011. Released: August 1, 2011. Alcohol: 17.9%.

Residual sugar: 0.12%. Velcorin free.

Awards & Reviews: Gold Medal: Sonoma County Harvest Fair

Previous vintage: 3 - 90+ ratings, 5 gold, 2 Best of Show.

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