



The 1998 Heritage Vineyard Label Project

One of the goals this year for Zinfandel Advocates and Producers (ZAP) was to design and produce a label for the Heritage Vineyard Zinfandel beginning with the 1998 vintage which was produced by Robert Biale Vineyards. Each vintage, a different ZAP producer assumes the privilege of crafting a Zinfandel wine from this unique vineyard's diverse collection of clonal selections – a living library of Zinfandel offspring from old vineyards all over California. The vineyard is located in Oakville, Napa Valley, within the UC Davis research vineyards and was planted by UC Davis with support from ZAP as a way to ensure and identify the genetic heritage of this enigmatic grape of still uncertain origins.

The objective for the label design was to bring together through words and imagery the key elements of what the Heritage Vineyard and Zinfandel is all about: The Heritage Vineyard name and story; Zinfandel's widespread adoption by California winemakers; Zinfandel's role in American agricultural history; Zinfandel's support by the non-profit educational alliance – ZAP; and in general, Zinfandel's classic qualities and diverse style characteristics from the rustic to world class. In addition, an official seal commemorating Zinfandel as America's heritage grape was discussed as a possibility for being incorporated into the labels design.

The resulting front and back labels, captured beautifully the key concepts and vineyard story as well as incorporating an official seal depicting an old Zinfandel grapevine ringed by the words "America's Heritage Grape". The bald eagle, an exceptionally strong American image was used to emphasize Zinfandel's American-ness. The words "The Heritage Vineyard" convey that the wine was made from grapes grown in a single vineyard. A more inclusive appellation, "California", was selected to convey the diversity of Zinfandel and its adoption by pioneering growers and winemakers throughout the State from its earliest history. And, finally, the ZAP logo was incorporated into the middle of the label to indicate the organization's sponsorship of this unique project.

The 1998 Heritage Vineyard Zinfandel

2.1 tons of grapes for this wine were harvested on October 7th by a U.C. Davis picking crew. The fruit was hand sorted at the winery and destemmed then lightly crushed back into the picking bins leaving a small percentage of whole berries. Brix at the crusher was 24.5. The must was inoculated with yeast and was punched down three time per day during fermentation. At dryness with an alcohol of 15.1%, the wine was pressed directly to French oak barrels, one of which was new Sirugue. The wine was racked several times during its 15 month stay in barrels then bottled on February 29th, 2000.

The bottled wine shows a nice polished dark ruby color with lots of spicy and ripe raspberry and berry character. Winemaker, Al Perry, chose to be especially careful about not letting the oak influences get in the way of the fruit expression of this unique vineyard's clonal selections. As a result, the subtle vanilla tones marry nicely with the forward berry/berry jam, allspice, and tea aromas of the fruit. On the palate, the wine already shows good balance, sweet/ripe fruit and elegant tannins and like many 1998 vintage Zinfandels, promises to develop even softer textural qualities and aromatic complexity in the years to come.

Dave Pramuk, Robert Biale Vineyards