

Wine Spectator

13 Exciting California Zinfandels

Recent releases from old names and new, including some great values

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There's plenty to get excited about in this week's selection of California Zinfandels, starting with the Seghesio Sonoma County 2008. The 2007 was a Zin rock star, placing 10th in *Wine Spectator's* [Top 100 Wines of 2008](#), with a 93-point rating on our 100-point scale. The 2008 may not be up to that standard, but it's an excellent wine and remains a decent value.

St. Francis, which produced some of the best Zinfandels of the 1990s, makes a big comeback with its 2007s. Leading the pack is the Sonoma Valley Montecillo Vineyard Kaarin's Terrace, but the Tres Viejos and Rowe Vineyard are also worth seeking out.

Quivira and Eberle have long track records with Zin and return to the top ranks after being absent for several vintages. Williams Selyem, Rosenblum and the Zin-based blend Paraduxx also had strong showings. With its 2007, Dark Horse also proved it wasn't a one-trick pony with the 2005 Treborce Vineyard, which scored 92 points two years ago.

There are also a few new labels in this tasting. Winemaker Ondine Chattan's résumé includes time at Cline Cellars and Ridge, and her experience shows in the XYZin Russian River Valley 50 Year Old Vines 2007.

Also new to the wine game, the Paul family farmed apples for years in Russian River Valley but switched to grapes a few years back and launched the Graton Ridge label. The Zinfandel Bacigalupi Vineyard 2007 was my first taste of their wine, and it's impressive.

ST. FRANCIS Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Montecillo Vineyard Kaarin's Terrace 2007 Score: 92 / \$40

Big, zesty and supple, with blackberry cobbler and licorice aromas and complex flavors of huckleberry and cracked pepper beef that finish with ripe but briary tannins. Drink now through 2014. 500 cases made. —*T.F.*

QUIVIRA Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Wine Creek Ranch 2007 Score: 91 / \$34

Zesty aromas of huckleberry and licorice lead to concentrated and complex flavors of blackberry, cracked pepper and roasted sage, with a long, appealingly rustic finish. Drink now through 2014. 375 cases made. —*T.F.*

GRATON RIDGE Zinfandel Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2007 Score: 89 / \$30

Soft and supple, with cherry pie aromas and zesty, jammy raspberry, licorice and cinnamon oak flavors that linger. Drink now through 2013. 273 cases made. —*T.F.*

PARADUXX Napa Valley 2006 Score: 89 / \$48

A blend that's both briary and well-structured, with black cherry and peppery sage aromas and sleek wild berry, mineral and licorice flavors that take on firm tannins. Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2015. 19,423 cases made. —*T.F.*

ROSENBLUM Zinfandel Sonoma County St. Peter's Church Vineyard Reserve 2006 Score: 89 / \$55

Bold and ultraripe, with aromas of smoky peppered beef and blackberry jam. There's plenty of heat in the flavors, but also powerful and briary black cherry, cinnamon and licorice flavors. Drink now through 2013. 1,325 cases made. —*T.F.*

ROSENBLUM Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Monte Rosso Vineyard 2007 Score: 89 / \$45

A big burly Zinfandel, with smoky plum and mushroom aromas and concentrated huckleberry, white pepper and sage flavors that end with firm, briary tannins. Best after 2012. 1,705 cases made. —*T.F.*

ST. FRANCIS Zinfandel Sonoma County Old Vines Tres Viejos 2007 Score: 89 / \$40

Ripe and well-structured, with blackberry cobbler and cracked pepper aromas that lead to powerful huckleberry, roasted dill and licorice flavors, ending with big, plush tannins. Drink now through 2015. 500 cases made. —*T.F.*

ST. FRANCIS Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Old Vines Rowe Vineyard 2007 Score: 89 / \$40

Muscular and complex, with ripe plum and toasty dill aromas and concentrated blackberry, cracked pepper, licorice and roasted sage flavors that are wrapped in dense but ripe tannins. Best from 2011 through 2014. 500 cases made. —*T.F.*

WILLIAMS SELYEM Zinfandel Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2007 Score: 89 / \$48

Sleek and well-defined, with raspberry and smoky white pepper aromas and layered cherry, vanilla and zesty oak flavors. Drink now through 2014. 275 cases made. —*T.F.*

XYZIN Zinfandel Russian River Valley 50 Year Old Vines Vine Age Series 2007 Score: 89 / \$35

Jammy yet nicely structured, with ripe raspberry and licorice aromas and supple huckleberry, white pepper and toasty sage flavors that linger toward briary tannins. Drink now through 2014. 1,000 cases made. —*T.F.*

DARK HORSE Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Treborce Vineyard 2007 Score: 88 / \$28

Lively and juicy, this is loaded with explosive fruit flavors, offering jammy black cherry, licorice, cracked pepper and sassafras. Drink now through 2014. 650 cases made. —*T.F.*

EBERLE Zinfandel Paso Robles Steinbeck Vineyard Wine-Bush Vineyard 2007 Score: 88 / \$24

Dense and rich with fruit, offering smoky huckleberry aromas and rich, layered boysenberry, sage and white pepper flavors that firm up on the finish. Drink now through 2014. 2,881 cases made. —*T.F.*

SEGHESIO Zinfandel Sonoma County Sonoma 2008 Score: 88 / \$25

Briary and zesty, with dried sage and wild berry aromas and tightly wound cracked pepper, dried cherry and licorice flavors that finish with slightly rustic tannins. Best from 2011 through 2014. 69,000 cases made. —*T.F.*