

Saturday, January 31, 2009

ZAP 2009 - The Decathlon of Zin!

Prepare to get ZAPPED!



<http://www.zinfandel.org>

So - WiseGuy finally made it. After all these years tasting wine. I had never been to the “main event” - the annual Zinfandel Advocates and Producers Grand Tasting at Fort Mason in San Francisco. It was a beautiful January finale.



I spent the previous evening with my daughter the UC Davis student, seizing the chance to visit and take her to dinner since I was in the neighborhood. Got up Saturday morning and took a drive over the hills to pick up tasting mates Young Bill, Susan, John, and Old Bill at the Oakland airport, then over the bay bridge to San Francisco. A quick stop for an egg sandwich in the hopes of getting something down to absorb a bit of what was about to

come. We arrived at Fort Mason, found an easy parking place, and walked down to the event. The sun was shining, with a temperature around 65 degrees, the Golden Gate was in view, and hundreds of sailboats were out enjoying it all. Stopped by the media check in and got my credentials (thanks, Julie Ann!) and we were off.



Right inside, I started off with one of my favorite wineries, Saucelito Canyon. Winemaker Amy Freeman was there pouring some new '07's and the '06 “1880” bottling which was showing beautifully. Great depth and complexity mark this special wine from the estate's oldest dry farmed vineyard. The '07 Backroads, a blend of small vineyard lots from the backroads of San Luis Obispo county showed a nice balance of fruit and spice. Amy also had a bottle of the '07 Marsanne hiding under the table (see my review of this wine [here](#).) This is really a special winery that has flown under the radar for many years,

and Amy is continuing the tradition. www.saucelitocanyon.com

So many zins to try - in just about any style you could imagine! A real standout was the Vino Noceto "OGP" 2006, with a barrel sample of the '07



showing great promise. OGP stands for "Original Grandpère Vineyard" one of the oldest zinfandel vineyards in California. Winemaker Rusty Folena always does a great job with the fruit from OGP. This wine ('06) has bright red berry flavors with the perfect balance of spice and cedar, a good acid level and a rich round mouthfeel with nice grip from balanced tannins. This wine will pair with just about any meat dish, elegant or spicy! <http://www.noceto.com>

Here are a few more of the worthy zins tasted:



2006 Dashe Todd Brothers Ranch Old Vine

<http://www.dashecellars.com>

Nice blackfruit and spice nose with a mocha note is delivered fully on the palate with a nice long lively and complex finish. Seems to have a firm enough structure to suggest as much as 5 years of cellaring - or decant now and serve with grilled steak or kabobs.



2006 Limerick Lane Collins Vineyard

<http://www.limericklanewines.com>

Winemaker Ross Battersby continues his Collins Vineyard mastery with this food friendly zin - More on the redfruit side, with raspberry and white pepper mixed with some balanced oak. Supple in the mouth with good acidity and a long finish of spiced berries - an elegant style made for the dinner table.



2005 Bradford Mountain Grist Vineyard

<http://www.bradfordmountain.com>

Very rich and concentrated. Nice balance of berries, mint, cocoa and anise on the nose, with a mouthfilling mix of berries, chocolate and coffee preceding a deep berry and spice finish. More balanced than the excellent '03 and '04 vintages.



2006 Carol Shelton "Rocky Reserve" Florence Vineyard, Rockpile

<http://www.carolshelton.com>

This could be Carol's best "Rocky" yet - solidly structured, this young wine shows a mix of red and black berries, bright cinnamon spice with a bit of clove and chocolate on the nose. The palate is not quite integrated yet, but shows good grip and fruit and spice. Carol's zins typically take a little while to come around - and they always do! This one shows great promise - and has a bonus of a great label redesign. Nice work, Mitch! Check out the '05 Maple, the '06 Monga and the '06 Wild Thing as well. Carol also makes a nice rose - check it out [here](#).



2006 Amphora Dry Creek Valley

<http://www.amphorawines.com>

Here's a classic Dry Creek Valley zin - bright raspberry and spice on the nose with berries, plum, lite vanilla and spice in the mouth with soft feel and integrated tannins and a long berry and spice finish. I make a wicked grilled pork chop with BBQ sauce that this would sing with.



2006 Benessere BK Collins Vineyard

2006 Benessere Black Glass Vineyard

<http://www.benesserevineyards.com>

Two beautiful food friendly zins - good acidity and elegant fruit - very balanced. Winemaker Chris Dearden's '07 barrel samples from these two vineyards are promising also.



2007 Hartford Family, Hartford Vineyard Russian River Valley

<http://www.hartfordwines.com>

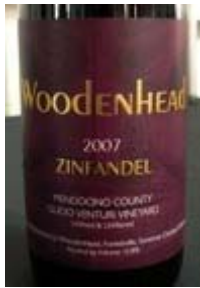
Big and bright - Raspberries, pepper and spice. Long and rich with some sweet oak on the finish. Great with a hunk of stilton!



2006 Rombauer

<http://www.rombauer.com>

What would ZAP be without a classic fruit bomb of a zinfandel? This blend of four counties has a huge cherry and berry nose with a touch of pepper and spice. Those aromas translate well on the palate with a juicy mouthfeel. If you like 'em big and jammy, this is a winner.



2007 Woodenhead Guido Venturi Vineyard, Mendocino County

<http://www.woodenheadwine.com>

This wine comes on strong with a bold currant, pepper and spice nose, big jammy fruit on the palate with nice pepper and sarsaparilla notes. Not for the faint of heart, but nicely balanced for this style with a nice long finish showing a touch of sweet oak.

Here are some more zins worth mentioning...

2006 Bella Vineyards Lily Hill

2007 Robert Biale Grande Vineyards

2006 Boeger Winery Walker Vineyard

2007 C.G. Di Arie Sierra Foothills

2007 Cline Cellars Ancient Vine California

2006 Davis Family Vineyards Old Vine Russian River Valley

2005 Fanucchi Vineyards Old Vine

2006 Frank Family Vineyards Napa Valley

2006 Kenneth Volk Vineyards Enz Vineyard, Lime Kiln

2005 Milliare Winery, Ghirardelli

2007 Sapphire Hill Winberrie Vineyard

2006 Seghesio Sonoma County Old Vine

2007 Shannon Ridge Estate

2006 Storybook Mountain Vineyards Mayacamas Range

2007 Turley Wine Cellars Hayne Vineyard

2006 Villa Toscano Winery Shenandoah Valley

For in depth reports on the following wineries, watch for the following links to become active soon:

MoniClaire Vineyards

Mounts Family Winery

Valdez Family Winery



It's impossible to taste all of the wines presented at ZAP, but it's fun trying. These wines were highlights for me among many well made wines. Check back often here at the WineWiseWeb for more zins throughout the year until ZAP comes around again in 2010!

