



Craig Pinhey, East Coast journalist who attended the recent media visit, appeared on CBC on an East Coast show called SHIFT. Below is the transcript from the radio interview.

<http://www.cbc.ca/shift/col-sommelier.html#>

Annual Event Showcases Zinsanity

Shift Sommelier Craig Pinhey was in California last week on a trip that culminated with a day at ZAP, the annual tasting of Zinfandel wines in San Francisco. He's back and here to talk about what he calls California's wine, and its dedicated fans.

CBC: What does ZAP stand for?

Craig: How you feel after tasting a few hundred 15% alcohol wines? No? Actually it is Zinfandel Advocates & Producers. ZAP is their annual grand tasting, and this year, their 18th, it was on January 31st. They actually had events from January 28th-31st.

CBC: How big is the main ZAP tasting?

Craig: Well, it takes up two pavilions! There are around 250 producers, and each one typically brings a few wines. Some bring 8 or 10. So that adds up to...well... a lot of wine!

CBC: What is it about Zinfandel that makes this event so popular?

Craig: Zinsanity. Fans of Zinfandel are like the cool & crazy people of Cali, not the rich suits who drink Napa Cab. I'm kidding of course, but there is definitely a whimsical side to Zin drinkers. You know, the crazy hats and clothing. I think it is because Zin is Cali's own wine. Although there are related grapes growing elsewhere, Zin is really home in Cali - it is where there are so many diverse styles grown in different terroirs. Everything from regular strength dry wines, to strong but balanced berry laden, peppery spicy wines with good acid, and finally monstrous raisiny alcoholic things that are only for sipping. And there's white zin.

CBC: Explain white zin. How did it come about?

Craig: According to the folks at Trincherro, which I visited last week, it was sort of an accident. The owners used a bleeding off technique to make their reds stronger, so they had this rose wine which they would ferment dry and sell as a Provence style in their tasting room. One year it had a stuck ferment and

stayed sweet. They bottled in anyway. People loved it. It took off and they became rich. Now they have a huge business and are building a fantastic culinary centre. But white zin is still kind of gross. Sappy sweet , no acid. It is embarrassing to talk about it next to great red zin, which Trinchero makes plenty of.

CBC: How many did you try and what were your faves at ZAP?

Craig: I didn't even come close to tasting them all. I did about 30 in the media tasting room to get calibrated, then I hit the floor where the action was. I tried the legendary Helen Turley Zins, then did flights of all the vineyard designated wines (barrel samples) from the famous R wineries, Ridge and Ravenswood. Those were my faves, because you can taste the difference the terroir makes. All in all I maybe tried around 60 wines. Sometimes I just took a nice sample outside (it was in the mid 70's) and sipped it, looking at the Golden Gate, the sailboats, and Alcatraz. It is a spectacular place for a wine tasting...

CBC: Zin of the week?

Craig: I've picked one that there is a lot of at ANBL. Ravenswood Vintners Blend Zinfandel \$19.99. I want to stress that this wine is not representative of the great single vineyard Ravenswood wines, but it is a very drinkable balanced blend of grapes from various terroirs. It is disconcerting that it can be purchased for under \$10 in Cali, but try not to think about this. One visit in the supermarket wine aisle there would really stress out NB wine lovers.