

LODI IS THE HEART OF ZINFANDEL COUNTRY

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* When it comes to the beloved Zinfandel grape, California rules the roost. Whether it is Napa or Sonoma or Amador County, many of the state's major wine regions are in on the game. But ask the Zin-heads of the world as to where the best Zinfandel comes from and most will point you to the proverbial Zin-capital, Lodi California.

Drinking wine from Lodi, in particular Zinfandel wine, is like seeing a unicorn; you really don't believe it at first. The richness and enjoyment of Lodi Zinfandel is hard to reconcile with such a modest price tag and consumers are often left wondering if there's a Catch 22.

Probably the best indicator of what Lodi can do is from the oldest operating winery in town, Oak Ridge. I'm not talking about the Secret City or even the country band, but rather a winery that makes several affordable Zinfandels that any Zin-head would adore. From their Old Zin Vines (OZV) and namesake Oak Ridge Ancient Vines to their modern labeled, Into Zin and Moss Roxx, the Zinfandels from the Oak Ridge Winery will set your heart on fire.

A few years back, a wayward wine merchant brought the OZV Zinfandel back to East Tennessee. Its entry into the market immediately raised the bar of competition as few other Zins offered such rich fruit flavors and spiciness while doing so for only \$12. The similarly priced Oak Ridge Ancient Vines Zinfandel soon followed, offering a "loaded to the gill" profile of holiday spices, minty eucalyptus and black cherries. This is Lodi juice after all and nothing short of over-the-top should be expected, well except maybe the price.

The latest introduction from the good people of Oak Ridge is the 2012 Into Zin. Cutesy monikers aside, this is one amazing bottle for having both a Lodi designation and retailing for only \$9.99. And its slogan of being "Zinlicious" is spot on. When most other Zins in the \$10 range are skimping on quality and sourcing fruit from all

over California, it
with a “come around for a second time”
Zins taste watery and run down.



Zin that Rocks: Moss Roxx Ancient Vines Zinfandel from Lodi.

And not to be outdone by the big-boys of Sonoma Valley with their \$40 and \$50 Zinfandels, the Oak Ridge Winery thought they could keep pace with a “high dollar” version of their own, the Moss Roxx. When you first pick up a bottle of Moss Roxx, it’s going to feel like you’re at the gym working out. That’s because the glass is so thick and the punt is so deep that even when the bottle is empty, you still think it’s full.

I tell you this because the winery didn’t skimp on quality at any level. The Moss Roxx is a beast of a Zinfandel- simultaneously jammy, alluring, spicy, decadent and mind-boggling. It’s mind-boggling because it offers all this just to be competitive with the high-end Zinfandel makers outside of Lodi. And it does so for only \$19.99. Now that’s how you rule the roost.

* A version of this
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