



Advancing a Legacy

The Zinfandel Chronicles

Transformation
Creates
New Tradition

The History of Zinfandel

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The History of Zinfandel



All other significant wine varieties have their reference points in Europe, but Zinfandel established its own tradition in California and has become known as America's Heritage wine. Zinfandel's history is a classic All-American success story—transforming from a little-known grape into one that has achieved such tremendous popularity that it is grown on more than 50,000 acres in the United States.

Each wine reflects the personality of the region in which it is grown. Bold and celebratory, independent and unpretentious, versatile and individual, Zinfandel has charted a course all its own, epitomizing the "New World." Experimentation as well as careful research and cultivation has led to ingenuity in vineyards and

wineries, resulting in the production of Zinfandel wines that range from lighter blush wines and sparkling rosés to sophisticated red table wines and rich ports.

Zinfandel is thought to be one of the oldest grape varieties from which wine is still being made. Research conducted by UC Davis viticulturists has given insight into the history of the grape. The Primitivo grape in Puglia, Italy, was found to be genetically identical to Zinfandel; however, Italians were sure it was not one of their traditional varieties. Historically, Croatia has had several indigenous varieties related to Zinfandel, but most were lost in the late 19th century.

One well-documented route of Zinfandel to California indicates that the grape came from an Austrian collection, and it is possible that Austria obtained the vines during its rule over Croatia. It wasn't until 2001 that researchers discovered just nine remaining vines of locally-known "Crljenak Kaštelanski" on Croatia's Dalmation coast. DNA fingerprinting confirms that the ancient Croatian variety has the same DNA structure as California Zinfandel.

Historians have traced Zinfandel's roots in the United States back to the 1820s, when cuttings from the Imperial collection of plant species in Vienna, Austria, were imported. By 1832, a Boston nursery was advertising "Zinfendal" vines for sale, and sometime between 1835 and 1845 "Zinfandel" had become a popular

Selected Resources

Zinfandel Advocates & Producers (ZAP)

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ZinWorld

ZAP's comprehensive resource center and online social networking site for wineries, growers, and advocates.



Resource Guide to Zinfandel

ZAP's guide to all things Zinfandel. zinfandel.org

California State University, Fresno

Viticulture & Enology Research Center
James Kennedy Chair, Viticulture

University of California, Davis

Viticulture & Enology Department

Andrew Waterhouse Chair, Viticulture & Enology Department
Hildegard Heymann Sensory Scientist
Carole Meredith Professor Emeritus
Ann Noble Professor Emeritus
James Wolpert Specialist, Heritage Vineyard

Chairs, Heritage Vineyard Project

Joel Peterson Ravenswood Winery
Paul Draper Ridge Vineyards

Current contact information
for all resources—

Website: zinfandel.org

grape in the Northeastern United States. Later, vines were transported west during the Gold Rush of the 1840s, where production surged because the grapes could be easily cultivated using the traditional European “head pruning” technique, requiring no special equipment or scarce resources like wire and timber. Zinfandel’s appeal soared during this time because it grew vigorously and provided miners with a versatile, substantial beverage.

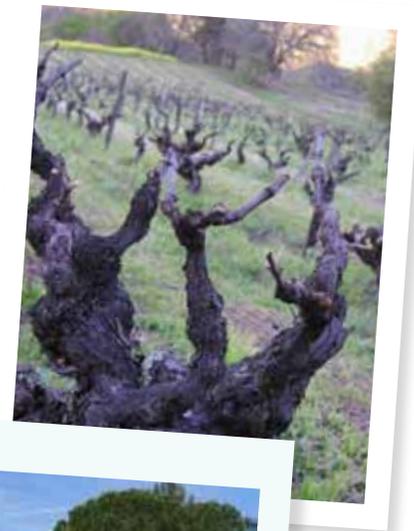
Zinfandel’s expansion in the 20th century is a testament to its hardy constitution. While most of California’s vineyards were destroyed by phylloxera in the late 1800s, Zinfandel vines were among the first vines replanted on rootstock starting around 1885. By mid-century it had become the most important varietal

among California red table wines. The wave of blush wines in the 1970s began when California wineries began to draw free-run juice from Zinfandel grapes, fermenting it as “white” Zinfandel. This started a trend that led to the preservation of old Zinfandel vines, which may otherwise have been lost through grafting over to other varietals at a time when red table wines waned in popularity.

The 1990s brought a focus on research and the involvement of Zinfandel enthusiasts in a movement to celebrate and promote the varietal. By the end of the decade, Zinfandel had become competitive in the world market, proving to an international audience that America could produce fine red table wines comparable to their European counterparts.

Today, Zinfandel can be found in every grape-growing region in California and beyond, including numerous vineyards throughout the United States and the rest of the world. Yet the exploration and expansion of the varietal is a work in progress. UC Davis researchers, along with the Zinfandel Advocates and Producers (ZAP) continue to study, replicate and certify additional Zinfandel selections through the Zinfandel Heritage Vineyard Project, which strives to propagate clones from the old vines and create a virus-free resource for future plantings.

Meanwhile, advocates and producers continue to expand their efforts, creating a movement dedicated to advancing the appreciation of Zinfandel wine while preserving its rich history.





Zinfandel Growing Regions: California

Although California is by far the primary Zinfandel-growing state, small amounts are also cultivated in Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Washington. In recent years Zinfandel has been planted in Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, France, Italy and Croatia.

Share your love of Zinfandel!
Connect with the World of Zin.

ZAP acts as a resource, connecting the Zinfandel community around the world. ZinWorld, found at the website: zinfandel.org, serves as ZAP's comprehensive resource center and online social networking site for wineries, growers, and advocates.

Zinfandel in America

- 1832** "Zinfendal" is advertized for sale by a Boston nursery, the first known reference made to this varietal.
- 1852-1857** Zinfandel vines are introduced in California.
- 1878-1889** Zinfandel is the most widely planted varietal during California's first wine boom.
- 1890s** Most of northern California's vineyards are destroyed by phylloxera. Some Zinfandel vines survive because they were planted on resistant rootstock or are isolated from the disease.
- 1900-1933** California vineyards are replanted. Zinfandel is the leading varietal in the production of red table wines. Zinfandel survives Prohibition, remaining popular among home winemakers.
- 1967** Zinfandel's similarity to Primitivo is recognized.
- 1973** White Zinfandel is born, as California wineries begin to draw free run juice from Zinfandel grapes, fermenting it as "white" wine.
- 1976** Research shows that Primitivo is probably the same varietal as Zinfandel; the evolution of Zinfandel is traced from New England to California.
- 1983** The Plavac Mali grape is suggested as a relative of Zinfandel.
- 1989** The search for "old vines," those planted before 1930, is launched.
- 1990-1998** Zinfandel vineyards in California grow to a total of more than 50,000 acres, again establishing it as California's number one red wine varietal.
- 1991** Zinfandel Advocates and Producers [ZAP] founded and recognized by the Wine Institute and wine industry as Zinfandel's official promotional organization.
- 1995** Old vines are planted in the Zinfandel Heritage Vineyard at the UC Davis Experimental Station in Oakville, Napa Valley.
- 2002** The Zinfandel grape is found to have the same DNA structure of the Croatia Crljenak Kaštelanski grape.
- 2009** The Zinfandel Heritage Vineyard Project releases its first virus-free certified selections to commercial nurseries.

Visit zinfandel.org to view the complete historical chronicle of Zinfandel.

Visit zinfandel.org to learn more about ZAP, read updates on the latest research, find upcoming events in your area, and connect with Zinfandel enthusiasts.



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Compile your personal Zinfandel anthology!

Log onto zinfandel.org/heritage

to view and print regular updates from

The Zinfandel Chronicles

including

Transformation Creates New Tradition

to learn about the research behind the vine.

