

ZAP Festival 2014 Changes Course

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The 2014 ZAP Saturday event will have a new look and feel this coming January. The location will be new and the format will be entirely revamped for the 22nd year of this annual Saturday gathering of Zinfandel oenophiles. What has been the “Zinfandel Grand Tasting” will now be known as “Tasting Tracks.” I spoke with Mark Vernon, President of the ZAP Board and President of Ridge Vineyards, about ZAP Festival changes: “We think the way we have planned the Saturday theme events will give folks a more enjoyable experience and be, in a sense, an education of Zinfandel wines.”



The Zap Grand Tasting 2012

Reason for the Change

The Saturday ZAP Festival event has been held the last two years at the Concourse in San Francisco, and before that it was held at Fort Mason. Neither one of those venues is any longer available, which meant finding a place big enough to hold representatives from 400 wineries and close to 10,000 attendees.

Evaluations of past ZAP Festivals found that regulars were tired of the “same old, same old” tasting and perhaps even more concerned about getting a taste of the latest vintage of their favorite Zinfandel wines. The event turns a bit rowdy in the late afternoon, and essentially one

has to fight through the mobs of tasters, some serious and many not so serious, to sample wine. Many of the participating wineries were also not exactly wild about pouring their valuable wine to over-served attendees. Was it really worth a winery's time and effort to be at the ZAP Grand Tasting?

Saturday ZAP Tasting Tracks – The Presidio

The Saturday event will now be held at three separate smaller venues, each based on a wine tasting theme, all at locations close to one another in San Francisco's beautiful Presidio. Each event will be repeated three times at specific time slots. Participants can purchase tickets for one or all three of the tastings.

The "Sensory Tasting" will emphasize the various characteristics of Zinfandel. Here a winery can compare and contrast two or more wines in their Zinfandel lineup. Small portions of food will be paired with the Zinfandel wines.

At the "Reserve and Barrel Tasting," the main emphasis will be on tasting Zinfandel that will be bottled in the future. Participants will have the chance to see what wines taste like as they age in the barrel. Wineries will also have the opportunity to pour library or reserve wines, something a little special in their Zinfandel lineup.

"Terroir Tasting" will give the participants a chance to taste Zinfandel wines from various AVA's. It's always a great educational experience when one has a chance to compare wines in this manner. What's the difference between Dry Creek Zin and Russian River Valley Zin? Or how does a Paso Robles Zin compare with a Lodi Zin?

ZAP will also have food trucks at each venue so folks can buy lunch or a snack if they want. The Presidio location should also provide a big improvement in parking areas.

On the surface, this new approach seems to offer a much better experience for both the ZAP attendees and the wineries. Zinfandel lovers can rejoice once again at the prospect of having the opportunity to discover Zinfandel wines and learn more about their character and flavors. For more information, visit the [ZAP Festival Website](#).



Two happy ZAP attendees in 2012