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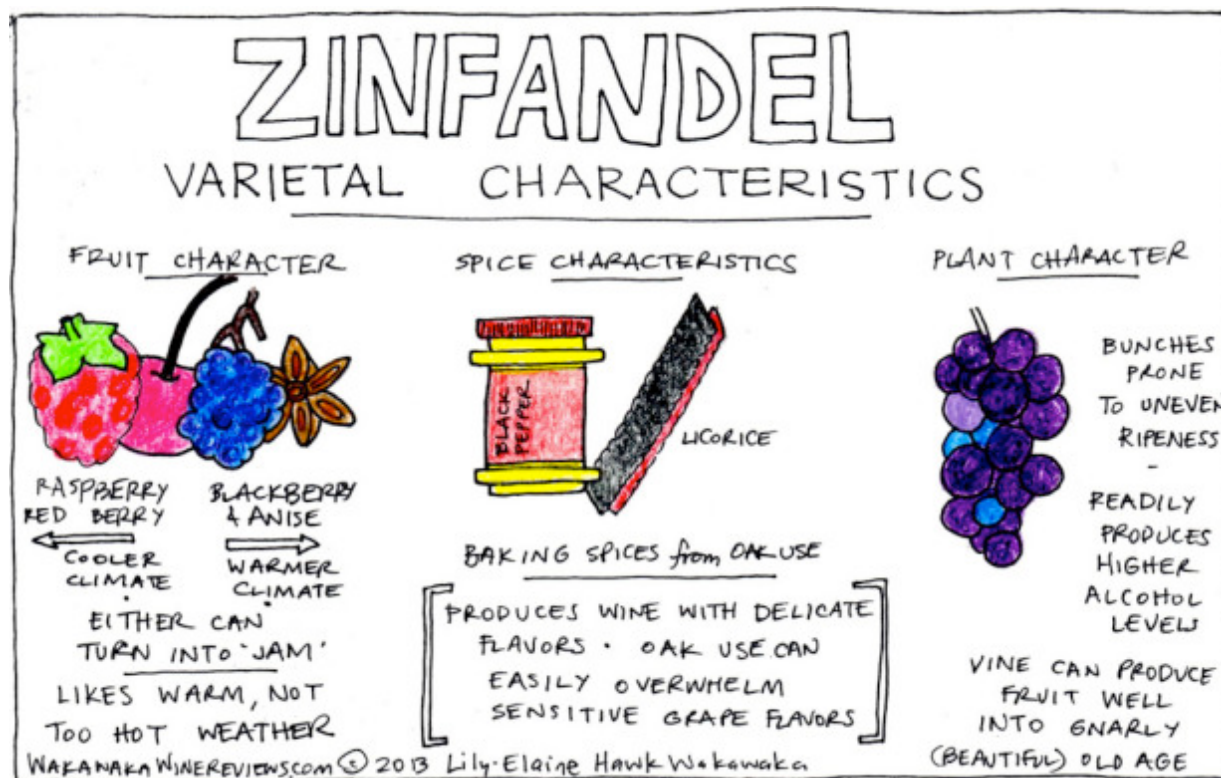
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ZAP: Heritage Vineyard Zinfandel Tasting Panel

Feb 5, '13 7:00 AM

Author [lilyelainehawkwakawaka](#) Categories [California](#), [Red Wines](#) Tags [characteristics card](#), [zinfandel](#)

Tasting at ZAP: The Heritage Vineyard Zinfandel Panel



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Zinfandel Advocates and Producers, aka. ZAP, hosted a Heritage Vineyards Panel, sponsored by the Historic Vineyard Society. The goal of the group is to help raise awareness about the incredible quality offered by genuinely older vines in order to encourage their preservation and maintenance, as well as appreciation for their resulting wine. The panel on Friday included tasting with vineyard and vine information. It was organized into four tasting groups of four wines each, separated by region in California—Mendocino, Sonoma, Napa, and Lodi. Each region was represented by an expert winemaker and vineyard scout from that area.

Following are notes on the wines. They were generally organized from lowest to highest alcohol, and overall coolest to hotter regions. It should be noted, however, that there are cooler and warmer zones in each, so for example while Lodi appeared last, portions of Lodi are much cooler than might be expected.

In general, Mendocino offered the prettiest iterations of the wine, with the Sonoma group the most varied (that county is HUGE). Napa wines showed the narrowest range of presentation between wines, but with the most layered flavors throughout. Finally, Lodi offered the most distinctive bunch with images of bear, lamb, and wrestling ferret trombling through my head from so much musk.

Mendocino

Mendocino county zinfandel is characterized by its more condensed growing season with frost often occurring into May, and harvest hitting in the third week of October. The diurnal difference is also significant, with temperatures dropping significantly at night preserving higher acidity levels in the grapes.

Interestingly, much of the zinfandel industry in Mendocino was instigated by plantings established to aid the efforts of World War II. The wine produced left tartaric acid condensation on the insides of the large redwood tanks. The tartaric was then scraped off and used in gunpowder needed to fight the war.

*** 2010 Graziano Family of Wines, Kazmet Vineyards**

I enjoyed this wine most in the flight. It offered a pretty red floral combined with earthy nose, and a refreshing dance-y palate clean and full of finesse. The presentation was long and juicy, with crunchy berry and light mint touches alongside hints of cocoa. It's only been in bottle for two weeks so watch for it to really open up.

2009 Golden Winery, Coro Mendocino

Including a mix of Syrah and Petit Sirah, this wine carries more weight than the Graziano, without heaviness. More tannic grip hits the palate as a result. Expect light red fruit undercurrent flowing under a very cocoa and prune driven wine with light menthol on both the nose and palate. The long prune finish, with a bit of weight, has a drying effect also showing forest floor.

*** 2011 Carlisle Winery & Vineyards, Du Pratt Vineyards**

I appreciated this wine. It offers prettiness and depth. Red and pink floral elements bring the nose into a zippy zippy palate of red flowers and cracked pepper, swirling with porcini mushroom and a dark chalky texture. It is not as heavy as the Golden while offering more weight than the Kazmet.

2010 Claudia Springs Winery, Rhodes Vineyard

Herbal, floral, and vanilla swirl and open into menthol here, uncurling into pine and bark on the palate. Again zippy zippy palate stimulation prickling through with cracked pepper, chocolate, followed by cocoa powder on the finish. The vanilla aspects weigh down the herbal aromatics for me.

**

Thank you to Dennis Patton for his selection of the wines, and discussion of Mendocino Zinfandel.

**

Sonoma

The greatest number of Zinfandel plantings occur in Sonoma. However, the various appellations and regions of Sonoma County are incredibly varied in soil type, temperature range, proximity to water, and elevation, generating a great range between various wines.

Sonoma Valley is predominately alluvial wash coming from the backside of Mt Veeder, with some cooler influence coming up the Bennett Gap from San Pablo Bay. Russian River Valley occurs in three sections differing temperature zones reaching from mountain to ocean. Dry Creek Valley has a high concentration of old vine Zin planted—beautifully gnarled head trained vines that can be viewed on a drive through the area. It is generally considered warmer than Russian River Valley. To the East and North of Dry Creek Valley is Alexander Valley. It is the largest and has the most concentrated plantings of the AVAs in Sonoma.

*** 2011 Bedrock Wine Co, Papera Vineyard (Sonoma Valley)**

Both the nose and palate offer cocoa and fresh mint with blue and black fruit integrated with spice and cracked pepper. The palate is fresh and juicy, with a clean and focused overall presentation. The oak elements here are integrated into the wine as a whole. I enjoyed this wine.

2008 Ridge, Mazzoni Home Ranch (Alexander Valley)

This is a big wine that fills the entire palate, and comes in full on the nose as well. It carries about 50% Zinfandel with slightly smaller portion of Carignan, and some mixed fruit from a field blend aspect of the vineyard. It is one of the oldest vineyards in the region, planted in the 1890s. This is a well made wine showing good proportions on the elements throughout. Still, it is bigger than I prefer, and has more weight on the palate

than I like. This is not a wine I can readily drink. The flavors here include vanilla and menthol integrated with red cherry, prune, and pepper. There is a nice dance of juiciness with a soft tannin grip and light dusty accents throughout.

*** 2009 Dashe Cellars, Louvau Vineyard (Dry Creek Valley)**

Candied prune and menthol come in alongside light black cherry and blackberry. This wine came in the most closed initially but opened to offer meaty aromatics, pleasing high notes, and a good lift on the palate. I enjoyed this wine and expect it will continue to uncurl in the bottle to offer even more complexity and interest.

2009 Ravenswood, Old Hill Ranch (Sonoma Valley)

An immediate offering of chocolate mint followed by dark fruit and rosemary here. The finish comes in with a chocolate covered prune finish. There is more weight on the palate and in the finish than I prefer on this wine. It will be interesting to taste again with more age. The wine includes some Carignan and Mourvedre.

**

Thank you to Morgan Twain Peterson for selecting the wines and discussing Sonoma County.

**

Napa

Napa County comes in as California's first AVA. Though it is widely associated with Cabernet now, it's history is dominated first by Zinfandel. George Yount took cuttings from General Vallejo to plant vines near what is now Yountville (a one mile long party town dominated by tourists. Yee haw!) Petit Sirah also showed up with an important historical presence by the 1960s. Cabernet didn't begin taking over until the 1970s. The AVA includes 16 sub appellations though it is only 30 miles long and 5 miles wide. It also has a significant diurnal swing throughout the appellation. According to Bob Biale, who moderated the Napa section, the valley also carries over half of the world's soil types.

2010 Mike and Molly Hendry, R.W. Moore Vineyard (Combsville)

Cocoa and cinnamon layer beside rose petal, red berry, menthol, and dried black cherry. There is light leather, portabello mushroom, and spice throughout this wine. The tannin is soft here giving a smooth, light texture, coming in beside a zippy, juicy acidity. 40% of the plantings are original or very old vine zinfandel field blended with Gamay, Mourvedre, and Petit Sirah.

2010 Robert Biale Vineyards, Aldo's Vineyard (Oak Knoll)

Sauteed mushrooms, with lanolin, chocolate, black cherry and black berry roll through with black pepper and passionfruit into a chocolate and cracked pepper finish. The tannin here is smooth, with a lightly hot and zippy palate. There is a lot of layer in this wine. 69% of the vines in Aldo's Vineyard are original or very old. The site is named after Bob Biale's father, Aldo, who preserved the plantings from the vicious Suburbia louse, a virus-carrying pest we have not yet found cure for.

2009 Chase Cellars, Hayne Vineyard Reserve (St. Helena)

Dried purple flowers, prune and berry, appear with purple fruit, forest floor and floral spice. There is light meat fat here breathing into a prune and cocoa finish. These are smooth tannins. Found in the warmest appellation of Napa, this wine still carries enough acidity for quaffing.

2010 T-Vine, Frediani Vineyard

I did not like this wine. The residual sugar overwhelms other flavors so that it was hard for me to retain more than black cherry with plum pungent jam surprise spread (it was even chunky in the mouth). Working at it I was able to get bacon fat, clove and nutmeg as well, with hints of pastry. This wine was a shocker.

**

Thank you to Bob Biale for selecting the wines and sharing information about Napa Valley.

**

Lodi

An old growing region, Lodi started in the 1860s, with it offering Zinfandel and 40 other varieties by 1883. The region survived through Prohibition sending lots of fruit back to the East Coast where it was made into wine for small family production. The area is dominated by a heavy sand content, keeping phylloxera at bay. As a result, the region hosts a lot of own rooted vines. The largest concentration of historic vineyards per overall acreage occurs in Lodi. It is only just starting to produce small scale local wineries, thus just beginning to show what is possible with Lodi fruit.

*** 2010 McCay Cellars, Contention, Train Wreck Vineyard**

I liked this wine. Has 5% Carignan. A distinct wild musk with wild mixed berries hits with integrated spice and purple floral notes, wet leather and lanolin. There is some rainstorm hillside mud wrestling happening behind this wine, as well as notes of wolf and lamb musk. My my. The vineyard was originally planted in 1935. In 1954 a train crashed alongside it spilling 100s of thousands of obsidian pieces into the sand of the vineyard. They remain today. Thus the name, Train Wreck Vineyard.

2011 St Amant Winery, Marian's Vineyard, Mohr-Fry Ranch

Black berry and black cherry are integrated with violet-spice and bear musk on the nose. The palate carries forward with well-integrated vanilla elements, and a wet leather finish. Chaps on a cowboy walking rain-washed ground we get here. That is, the chaps are wet. There is a nice tannic grip without roughness on this wine. Mohr-Fry is the most famous vineyard in Lodi, planted in 1901 by the Mettler Brothers.

*** 2010 Turley Wine Cellars, Dogtown Vineyard**

Fresh blackberry bramble, sage and mint lighten the nose, bringing blackberry, black plum, and spicy leather chaps (again with the chaps, this time they're dry but after a long ride through the dusty hillsides at the edge of the region). Clove comes in with a light dust bowl scent. The vineyard was planted in 1944 on own root, in the Northeast of Lodi's Clement Hills.

2010 Macchia, Outrageous, Noma Ranch

Black fruit, primarily plum, and also cherry, carry wood bark and forest floor into the palate showing fruit stamen spice, floral and dried fruit skin, dried orange zest, light leather, and the musk of wrestling ferrets (I'm not making this up. The ferrets are totally wrestling.) The flavors here are softened, and the tannin smooth.

Post-edit: The Historic Vineyard Society was inadvertently named as the Heritage Vineyard Society in the original version of this post.

**

Thank you to Tegan Passalacqua for selecting the wines and coordinating the Lodi discussion.

Thank you to Joel Peterson for moderating the panel, and Rebecca Robinson for representing ZAP.

Thank you to Julie Ann Kodmur.

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1. [Ryan Sherman](#),
[February 6, 2013 at 9:55 am](#)

Maybe the best overview I have seen in a long time. Thank you.

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- o [lilyelainehawkwakawaka](#),
[February 6, 2013 at 10:42 am](#)

Thank you, Ryan. I really appreciate your comment.

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2. [doug wilder](#),
[February 6, 2013 at 3:35 pm](#)

I think you meant to write Historic Vineyard Society. <http://www.historicvineyardsociety.org>

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- o [lilyelainehawkwakawaka](#),
[February 6, 2013 at 7:22 pm](#)

Indeed I did, Doug. Thanks for catching that!

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3. [Patrick,](#)
[February 7, 2013 at 12:13 pm](#)

I wonder why Amador is not represented here.

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- o [lilyelainehawkwakawaka,](#)
[February 12, 2013 at 7:54 pm](#)

Hi Patrick, my best guess is that the areas presented were based on highest number of Zinfandel plantings. So, while Amador has a good number, Sonoma County apparently represents half total Zin plantings in California, Napa, Lodi, and Mendocino together present around 40%, and 'other' the rest—this is according to a diagram presented during the panel presentation. Amador would seem to fall within the remaining 10% not presented.

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