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FOOD & DRINK | FEBRUARY 3, 2012

Zinfandel festival goes to next level at new venue



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Zinfandel festival 2012
Credits:
Zinfandel Advocates & Producers

"It was like a fantasy university of Zinfandel, with more ways to learn and also have fun than ever before," said Bob Biale (the proprietor of Robert Biale Vineyards in Napa and President, Board of Directors, Zinfandel Advocates & Producers), in describing the 21st Annual Zinfandel Advocates & Producers Festival, which offered four events January 26 – 28 in San Francisco . From a haiku contest to a giant tweet screen, the ZAP Festival provided an enormous array of choices for tasting, learning and socializing---all focused on America's heritage grape.

"We're getting overwhelmingly enthusiastic feedback about our new venue at The Concourse and about the Festival in general from all of our attendees," commented Rebecca Robinson, Executive Director, Zinfandel Advocates & Producers. "We're also hearing that the Festival has moved into world-class wine-event status because of our unique mix of educational events as well as pure fun," she added.

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The Festival's grand finale event, The Grand Tasting, welcomed approximately 8,000 people to The Concourse at

8th & Brannan on January 28. The 'university' of choices at the Tasting included the option to taste more than 500 different Zinfandels from 204 Zinfandel wineries and attend [winemaker workshops](#), a [sommelier panel](#) and watch Chef Tyler Stone demonstrating how to make Zinfandel ice cream with liquid nitrogen.

The diversity and versatility of Zinfandel emerged in many forms this year. One example: San Francisco's *Vinography* wine blog conducted a [haiku contest](#) where the prize was a set of tickets to the Festival.

The Festival incorporated an enormous array of detail, starting with the 4,900 baguettes (from Bakers of Paris), 100 large loaves of bread (from Panorama) and 1,200 pounds of cheese. "It was all Zinfandel all the time," remarked Duane Dappen, of D-cubed Cellars. "ZAP's mission is education, sharing the uniqueness which Zinfandel represents in the world of wine, and at the same time, preserving its unique legacy through supporting research vineyards," Dappen added. "This year's Festival expressed that goal in four distinct events." Of note this year was that two of the Festival events---Epicuria and The Grand Tasting---were staged at a new venue, The Concourse at 8th & Brannan. Also of note was the unusually wide array of sponsors.

One of the Festival's most popular elements this year was a giant Twitter screen at the entrance to The Grand Tasting, the culmination of an extended Twitter campaign. Crowds of people gathered around the big screen and tweeted using the tag #Zinfest, thus scoring a place on the screen. "It was a huge hit," said Susan Curtis, founder of All Social, who directed ZAP's social marketing effort. "Picture a modern campfire, with people sharing their thoughts and favorites---but this time plug in 2012 and smart phones," she explained.

"Including Twitter and Facebook in our communications helped us build an enormous public forum for Zinfandel," Curtis added. "Wineries, their customers, restaurants, retailers---everyone participated and benefited," she continued. And the viral enthusiasm was more than just words; during Epicuria there was huge traffic of photos of the elaborate food-Zinfandel combinations enjoyed that night."

Epicuria: Food & Zinfandel Pairings offered an intimate way to explore the magic of matching food and Zinfandel, as brought to life by 50 restaurants, paired with 50 wineries. Attendees asked vintners and chefs in detail how they developed their very specific pairings, and the air buzzed with excitement. [A complete listing of the pairings is here](#). Epicuria also included [The ZinKitchen](#), featuring demos and presentations from Chef Ethan Mantle from Componere, Chef David Taylor and Sommelier Shelley Lindgren from A16 and Chef John Gurnee and Sommelier Ken Wagstaff from Wayfare Tavern.

The Grand Tasting: From A To Zin was the concluding grand finale of the Festival, taking place on January 28 at The Concourse. Again this year ZAP offered [ZinTracks](#), a guide to the Tasting which segmented wineries by ten different categories, from appellation and price point to the winery's pet.

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The 22nd Annual Zinfandel Advocates & Producers Festival will take place January 31, February 1 & 2, 2013 in San Francisco. Watch zinfandel.org for the details.

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Steve is a wine lover, writer, blogger, marketer, promoter and educator. Educated at the Culinary Institute and UC Davis, plus managing a wine...

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