



FROG'S LEAP

2023 ZINFANDEL

NAPA VALLEY

A BRIEF HISTORY

At Frog's Leap, we have been fortunate enough to work with the same Chardonnay vineyard ever since our first vintage in 1985. Planted by the renowned Truchard family in 1979, these vines are deeply rooted in the decomposed shale and sandstone that are characteristic of the steeply-sloped hillsides of Carneros, and lend themselves perfectly to the balanced, restrained style that is our signature. Fermented for only a handful of days in new French oak barrels, the wine is racked at the peak of its fermentation to insulated vessels that keep the residual heat, where it sits, untouched and sur lie, for up to 12 months. Grown in shale and stone, our Chardonnay boasts incredible freshness and a distinct mineral edge that speaks directly to its origins.

ABOUT THE WINE

We are big believers in Zinfandel, and we think you should be, too. Delicious, exuberant fruity aromas belie a sophistication to our wine that pushes the boundaries of what it means to be serious Zinfandel, and lay the foundation for the unexpected—a Zin that can age. I have always tried to push our style in the direction of freshness, balance and elegance, which I believe yields a wine that is both more enjoyable and better reflective of the beautiful vineyards in which we grow our grapes. We farm our Zinfandel in St. Helena, just five miles north of our home in Rutherford, with the vast majority coming from just two vineyards, White Barn and Molinari, both of which sit in the gravel soils of the large alluvial fan that defines this appellation. Zinfandel thrives in this kind of soil; unfortunately for Zinfandel, Cabernet also does well in this soil, and Zin is a vanishing quantity in Napa, despite its seeming ubiquity in the rest of California. However, we continue to farm this heritage grape, in the belief that there is no better grounding for the elegant style of Zin that we love.

We have a slightly unusual technique that we employ for co-fermenting Petite Sirah and Zinfandel. We pick the Petite Sirah a few days ahead of our largest Zinfandel pick (at White Barn) and cold-soak the entire lot. Once the Zin is picked and begins to get hot with fermentation, we combine the two varieties together in a co-fermentation that has multiple advantages—first, it cools down the fermentation, allowing for a smoother, more gentle extraction of flavors; second, the specific addition of Petite Sirah adds “bones” to Zin—tannin and acid—and paradoxically makes Zinfandel wine taste more like itself. Low new oak use (<5%, typically about 80% American) and extensive aging in small concrete cubes (roughly 66% of the wine) preserves the freshness and tempo that is so critical to Zinfandel's primary virtue: joy in a glass, the crystal ball of red fruit energy that embodies why wine is fun.

2023 broke the drought, broke the heat and broke the mold for vintages in Napa, with a long, cool, and late growing season and harvest season that emphasized freshness and richness in equal measure. Ample rainfall allowed our Zin vines to recover their strength a bit, resulting in an average crop level. The Petite Sirah at Galleron came in at just 21.5 brix despite being picked a week later than usual, adding tremendous structure and freshness to the wine. The '23 Zinfandel lots in general had an upright, highly structured and unusually black-fruited character that I attribute to the long, cool growing season. High acidity, extremely low pH, and yet ample sugar and ripeness produced the kind of year we cherish in Napa—rich and yet incredibly bright and fresh.



BALANCE, RESTRAINT AND DEEP RESPECT FOR THE NATURAL EXPRESSION OF THE VINE



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Ultimately, the finished wine mirrors the cool, structured nature of the year. Dense, dark fruitiness without even a hint of over-ripeness combines with black pepper spice and chocolate aromas to give an especially restrained expression of Zinfandel. The palate is much more tannic than is typical for our Zinfandels, backed by ample acidity and a brooding character to the flavors. While many of our Zins burst out of the glass and require no aeration, the '23 benefits greatly from 30-60 minutes in a glass or decanter in order to unwind. All that wound-up character and serious structure presages great things for the wine's future, and elevates its food pairing potential beyond the world of barbeque. I'll be checking in on this vintage for a long time to come. —R.W.

THE BLEND

85% Zinfandel
14% Petite Sirah
1% Carignane

53% White Barn vineyard, St. Helena - Zinfandel
27% Molinari vineyard, St. Helena – Zinfandel and Petite Sirah
10% Gonzalez vineyard, St. Helena – Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, and Carignane
5% Galleron vineyard, Rutherford – Petite Sirah
5% Pesch vineyard, Rutherford – Petite Sirah

THE VINES

100% Certified organic and dry farmed, estate grown

STATISTICS

harvested: August 22 to August 30
at harvest: 24.5 deg. brix 6.86 g/L total acidity, 3.36 pH
final: 14% alcohol, 5.43 g/L total acidity, 3.60 pH, 0.008% residual sugar
bottled November 7, 2024
7,881 cases produced

WINEMAKERS

John Williams
Rory Williams
Pablo Polanco

VINEYARDIST

Frank Leeds



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