Varietal Focus:
Zinfandel

Lance Cutler

PICKING GRAPES IS NOT AN EASY WAY to make a living. Walking rows in the chilled dark of night, using bright spotlights to locate the fruit and cutting the bunches into your lug boxes is hard work. Dragging those boxes from vine to vine until they are filled and dumping them into macro bins becomes repetitive and exhausting. Grape pickers get paid by weight, and grapes aren't all that heavy...except for Zinfandel. Pickers love to pick Zinfandel grapes. The berries are big, the bunches are large and heavy, and they tend to hang freely on the vine, easy to reach and cut. Compared to other varietals, getting paid to pick Zinfandel is like getting a Christmas bonus.

Zinfandel will happily grow just about anywhere in California to the joy of pickers everywhere. Turning those grapes into complex, delicious wine, however, is fraught with challenges. The large, thin-skinned berries are susceptible to mold and rot. They are sensitive to the sun. Grapes ripen unevenly, often having green berries and raisins in the same bunch as ripe grapes. Zinfandel dehydrates quickly, so sugars spike rapidly in heat events, and in hot vintages those spiking sugars can outpace flavor development.

Trying to coax even ripening in Zinfandel requires intensive hands-on care in the vineyard. Trimming the shoulders and tips of bunches, removing clusters that are too close together and dropping green fruit can help. Canopies need to be rigorously controlled so they allow enough sunlight to ripen the grapes but not enough to raisin the fruit while still providing good airflow around the bunches. The picking window is narrow: pick too soon and the wine can be overly acidic without the bright berry and lush fruit associated with the grape; pick too late, and the wine can be dominated by prune and raisin flavors and aromas. Zinfandel is a challenge.

For this Varietal Focus we found nine experienced producers with history and passion for the grape who are up to that challenge. From Napa Valley, **David Natali of Robert Biale Vineyards** works with grapes dating back to the 1930s. **Julie Johnson from Tres Sabores** specializes in single vineyard wines from historic sites. **Eric Titus** returned to the family vineyard where he spent his childhood to help develop **Titus Vineyards**.

From Sonoma County, **Courtney Robinett Wagoner** copes with steep hills to produce Zinfandel for **Martinelli Winery**. **Andrew Nalle** continues his family's history at **Nalle Winery**, and **Shauna Rosenblum** and **John Olney** work together on a dramatic field blend from **Ridge Lytton Springs**.

Farther south in Paso Robles **Lance** and **Claire Silver** have been directing **Tobin James Cellars** for 35 years, **Janelle Dusi** tries to bring her family's 100 years of grape farming experience to light at **J Dusi Wines**, and **Brock** and **Michelle Waterman** work together to produce wine from their **Brochelle Vineyards**.

Robert Biale Vineyards

2023 Black Chicken Zinfandel

14.7% abv, 6,000 cases, $55

DAVID NATALI GREW UP in New York where he developed an interest in wine as a young adult. In 2004 he made his way to California and found work in the wine business. He worked eight years at Clos Pegase in Napa, spent a year in graduate studies in Southern France and another year in Northern Italy. He returned to California, making wine for La Rochelle then moving to Robert Biale in 2018 as assistant winemaker. He was promoted to winemaker in 2022.





ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

Pinot Noir is our model, so we look for aromatics first and appreciate a round, plush texture. We are focused on building a wine whose core showcases the generosity and plushness of fruit that Zinfandel is known for. To increase interest across the palate, we try to introduce savory elements through new barrel selections and certain reductive winemaking techniques. We embrace the grape's natural acidity, seeing it as the guiding force of the wine from start to finish. We also selectively extract lots to ultimately build a tightly woven tannic structure on which to frame the wine.

The Biale Family has been growing Zinfandel in the Oak Knoll District since the 1930s. Aldo Biale produced jug Zinfandel and sold it on a party line phone system under the code name "Black Chicken." While primarily consisting of fruit from our two estate properties, it is a blend of several vineyards. The average age of vines in those vineyards is 38 years. Mostly from valley floor vineyards the elevation ranges between 30 to 130 feet. Soils are predominantly gravelly loam. Row spacings are a combination of 7x5, 8x6 and 8x8 feet. Home ranch rootstock is 110R and 1103P, and old vines are almost entirely St. George. Clones are Heritage selections. One-third of the vineyards are dry-farmed; the other two-thirds have irrigation, but we rarely use it. All vineyards are sustainably farmed, using organic practices. We average three tons per acre.

In the vineyard we pull leaves and laterals to increase air flow within the canopy but are careful not to expose clusters to direct sunlight. We want to tighten the ripening window, so prior to bunch closure, we remove all wings and shoulders. Where clusters are particularly large or a fruit zone is too congested, we will adjust clusters on alternating canes to two clusters, one cluster, two clusters, one and so on. Green drop is carried out at 80-90% veraison.

Once a minimum sugar is reached through analysis, most of my picking decisions come down to intuition. My largest signals are softening of the skins and a shift in the perception of malic acid, along with seed ripeness. Watching weather is critical because old vine and dry-farmed sites can jump in sugar in just a few days of heat. When possible, we like to pick between 24° to 25° Brix, with pH ranging between 3.2-3.5.

Grapes are harvested by hand into micro bins and sorted for rot and MOG. At the winery we cluster-sort on a table then destem without crushing. Whole berry fermentation is essential for the aromatic delicacy we're after. Crucial to our process, we use a Pellenc destemmer which allows us to keep dehydrated berries attached to the removed stems, keeping them out of the tank.

We add 30 to 40 ppm SO_2 at the destemmer and cold soak for three to five days at 50° to 55°F. We punch down once a day during cold soak. We'll add various commercial yeast selections. William Seylem seems to help with our aromatics; others help with esters and structure and are site-specific. We ferment in open-top, four- to 10-ton fermenters and some T-bins. We add nutrients, 60% from organic nitrogen sources and 40% from blended organic/inorganic sources at start of fermentation and again after 8 to 10° Brix drop. We punch down two to three times daily, with one aerative pump-over at 10 to 12° Brix for yeast health. We reduce punch downs around 5° Brix. Maximum fermentation temperature is 85°F.

We press at dryness or a few days later if tannins are still broadening. When tannins shift to a more drying profile, we press. Free run and lighter press fractions are blended together based on taste. Higher press fractions are kept separate. Wine goes to tank where we confirm sugar is below five grams. Wine settles for 24 hours, then gets inoculated with malolactic bacteria and immediately racked to barrels. We use 100% French oak barrels with 30% new. Individual lots are racked post-ML completion and again approximately six months post-pressing. Wine is cross flow- and sterile-filtered, receives natural cork closures and gets four months' bottle age before release.

Tasting Notes:

Natali: There is dark bramble fruit with a hint of red fruit that I like for the interest. The oak is there, lending warmness without overpowering. On the palate it is broad but remains acid driven. There are moderate tannins with a plush mouthfeel. There is a persistent, long finish. This was a big vintage but showed concentration in spite of that. I think it has great potential for ageing.

Others: Just glamorous and elegant without being flashy. Love the aromatics of brambleberry, pomegranate, a cornucopia of berries. There is red fruit, along with dark fruit, and the body allows it to emerge with such life. The modest alcohol allows the wine to shine. Pure concentrated fruit with seamless tannin, great balance and a long finish. Classic Napa blueberry/blackberry on nose with focused balance on palate. Cherry, blueberry, some mushroom earthiness with a clean tight finish. Dark, moody and savory. Spice, spice, spice but balanced. Lean and clean with lovely full palate and some pepper on the back end.

Tres Sabores

2023 Rutherford Zinfandel

14.8% abv, 592 cases, $58

BEFORE WORKING IN THE WINE BUSINESS, Julie Johnson worked as a public health nurse. Moving to Napa Valley, she co-founded Frog's Leap Winery with then husband, John Williams, and Larry Turley, where she focused on sales and marketing. She started her own winery, Tres Sabores, in 1999, selling Zinfandel made by three different winemakers. After four years, she took on the winemaking duties herself. She specializes in hand-crafted, single vineyard wines from her own estate, as well as other select vineyards. She champions organic farming with biodiversity as a major component.



ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

Our goal is to create an impression of layered elegance in our Zinfandel, instead of the "fruit bomb" style. Our wine possesses complex darker fruit and pepper with a balance reflective of Zinfandel's naturally fresh acidity. The "old vine" dry-farmed essence of our vineyard confers a smooth, medium tannin impression, and I minimize the use of new oak to underscore that characteristic. It is important to us that this wine pairs with a wide variety of foods.

Our vineyard is its own alluvial fan, rolling downhill from the western foothills. Soil is rocky, almost silty loam to clay loam with very deep soil in the middle of the vineyard. Elevation is between 100 to 225 feet. Vine spacing is 8x10 feet, originally planted in 1972 to California sprawl cordon that I uplifted in 2001. Rootstock is St. George, and the clones are believed to be Werle. We dry-farm the vineyard, are CCOF organic and Napa Green Certified. Production averages two and a half tons per acre.

We vary cover crops, utilize insectaries and have had good results with biochar. We do not till. We cordon-prune and thin to two buds per spur, take off all laterals on the east side at and slightly above the fruit zone. We selectively leaf in the fruit zone for air circulation and light. We concentrate shoot positioning to free up each cluster. We do some fruit drop at veraison with most shoulder clusters removed at 20° Brix and used for Rosé. We also reposition clusters as necessary.

We pick based on dedicated sampling and repeated tasting. We watch malic acid and potassium levels, usually picking with .5 to .6 TA. We look for the flavor to turn to that almost ripe cherry, like fresh, piquant olallieberry. Grapes are hand-picked and meticulously sorted at the harvest bin in the vineyard then again on a table at the winery. We remove any distressed fruit and as many raisins as possible. Grapes are destemmed only with no crushing and no SO_2. Fruit is picked very early, and it comes in cold. It goes to T-bins with no temperature control as mostly whole berries. It cold-soaks at ambient temperature until fermentation begins.

We use native yeast primarily but will add various commercial yeast (like 212 or Rockpile) if needed or for variety and interest. I will add Nutri start organic based on YAN. Because of our site's high potassium, we will sometimes add tartaric acid to compensate for that shift on a lot by lot basis. We use gentle punch downs two to three times a day, tapering off as fermentation finishes. Average fermentation is between 78° and 88°F. We press the separate lots at negative Brix, keeping free run separate from press juice, but find that increasingly, we end up blending the lots together.

After pressing, we leave the wine in the T-bins, add malolactic bacteria, stir and then rack to barrels. We use 100% French oak with 30% new and 30% first year post-white wine fermentation barrels. This 2023 wine was aged in barrels for 20 months. It was racked twice. We Cuno-filter and then sterile-filter the wine into the bottle, using natural cork to seal. This wine aged in bottle four months before release.

Tasting Notes:

Johnson: I love the approach. It has that olallieberry, raspberry and blackberry combination. It has a little bit of pizzazz and quite a bit of verve. It tastes very young and is not overly tannic by any means. There is a nice carbonic zing to the wine. The wine has a lot of pepper, along with savory brambleberry notes, but more Aleppo pepper and white pepper, more than black pepper.

Others: Lovely, elegant and inviting bramble fruit. There is an inviting, almost garrigue aspect to it. Freshness on the palate which is absolutely beautiful and lends it length. There is a broad tannin profile that's filling without being hard. There is expressive red fruit, a hint of cardamon and gentle tannins. Focused plum and nice acidity that gives the wine focus. High acidity with a little bitterness. Lighter body with some medicinal cherry and some earthy Rosé character.

Titus Vineyards

2023 Napa Valley Zinfandel

14.8% abv, 1,900 cases, $54

GROWING UP, ERIC TITUS worked in the family vineyard in Napa Valley with his brothers and father. He earned his doctorate degree in Biology and worked around the world as a researcher and an environmental consultant throughout the 1990s. In 1997 he returned to St. Helena to undertake redevelopment of his family's vineyards at the estate property. Today he is General Manager and Vineyard Operations Manager of the winery.



ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

We want to create a wine that expresses the flavor profile of our nearly 50-year-old Zinfandel vineyard. We want a balance of fruit intensity and structure that shows finesse. The aromas should be dark fruit, briary, complemented by an array of spicy characteristics. We prefer a medium weight mouthfeel, soft and smooth tannin structure, and moderate alcohol for the varietal.

The estate vineyard is alluvial sandy loam on the valley floor at about 215 feet above sea level. Vine spacings are 10x8 feet. The clone is DuPratt planted on St. George rootstock. We farm traditionally, dry farm and average four tons per acre. We do not plant cover crops, and we disc between rows. Canopy management consists mostly of pulling laterals with minimal de-foliation. St. George rootstock can produce a heavy crop, so we thin down to four tons per acre most years. Thinning is a standard two clusters per healthy shoot. Clusters are de-clumped when necessary.

We do our best to pick based on flavor development, but warm vintages present a challenge. Sugar accumulation can run away from us in the dry farmed blocks. We look for even ripening and flavor development of spicy fruit and a touch of sweet vermouth. Grapes are hand-picked and delivered to the winery a few hundred yards away. Grapes are destemmed and optically sorted before receiving 50 ppm SO_2 and being pumped to a closed top stainless steel tank. We cold-soak for three days at 55°F. We inoculate with RP 15 yeast, which does a good job of finishing fermentations. DAP is added to adjust YAN to 300 at inoculation and again at one-third depletion in Brix. Fermaid K is also added at one-third depletion in Brix. We use tartaric acid to adjust pH to the 3.7 to 3.8 range. Cap is managed by pump overs: half the tank volume daily during cold soak; one to two volumes per day during fermentation. Maximum fermentation is 90°F.

We press when the extraction of tannin and color reaches our standards, keeping free run and press wine separate. The juice goes to tank and settles. Then we inoculate for malolactic with CH16 and rack to barrels where it rests for 11 months. We evaluate the press wine after malolactic and will often blend some back into the free run. We only stir lees for SO_2 additions to the barrels. This Zinfandel was aged in 15% new French barrels, 15% new American barrels and 70% neutral barrels. The wine gets racked after malolactic fermentation and again for bottling. Wine is pad-filtered to 0.65 microns, sealed with natural cork and rests for four months before release.

Tasting Notes:

Titus: Aromatics of Bing cherry, blackberry horehound, bay and Asian five spice notes out of the glass. The wine fills the palate with constrained intensity, balanced acidity and glossy tannins that maintain a bright freshness throughout. Rich blackberry notes give way to root beer and molasses through to the finish.

Others: Lovely savory red fruit on the nose, along with darker blue fruits. Round, creamy palate that lends elegance. Moderate tannins frame the wine nicely. A smoky, sinuous backbone possibly from oak. Almost like Dolcetto with black and green olives, saddle leather and a really interesting nose. This tastes like a Napa Valley Cabernet approach to Zinfandel. Dense, dark blackberry that opens beautifully in the glass. Ripe blackberries with a toasted coffee cocoa character. Dusty oak with blackberry and a rounded sweet texture. The oak tannins surround all that sweet fruit. There is sweet barrel spice with refined tannins that are silky smooth all the way through the finish.

Nalle Winery

2023 Dry Creek Valley Old Vine Zinfandel

13.9% abv, 538 cases, $54

ANDREW NALLE HAS LIVED his whole life in the Dry Creek Valley. For six generations his family has been involved with agriculture or winemaking. His great-grandfather planted his old vine Zinfandel vineyard in 1927 during Prohibition. His parents, Doug and Lee, founded Nalle Winery in 1984. Andrew graduated from the University of Redlands with a degree in Philosophy and later pursued formal wine education, ending up with an MS Degree in Viticulture and Enology from California State University, Fresno. He grew up on the Dry Creek property, where he still lives, and he has worked full-time at Nalle Winery since 2002, assuming the primary winemaker role in the 2010s.



ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

Less is more defines our style. We want a balanced wine with moderate alcohol and a moderate presence of French oak, along with a smooth mouthfeel and finish. This is a field blend, so we expect complex flavors and aromas of strawberry, pomegranate, mulberry and creamy raspberries. We want alive tannins that smooth out with age. We want a wine that is versatile with food, a pleasure to drink young but one that can handle long-term ageing.

Our vineyard was planted in the 1920s on alluvial soils (Arbuckle gravelly loam). Elevation is 315 feet. Vine spacing is 8x8 feet planted to St. George rootstock, and the vines are too old for us to know the clones. We dry-farm, following Lodi Rules and are sustainable organic. We use cover crops, which are tilled back into the soil, along with chopped pruned canes, creating more organic material to improve the water-holding matrix to seal the top of the soil, keeping the moisture below the surface. We use compost teas twice a year and have owl boxes to control varmints. We drop fruit or remove shoulders when needed so bunches are not touching. We only pull leaves on the morning side. We average just under four tons per acre.

For determining when to pick, we taste for flavor and tannin ripeness, waiting for green and bitter flavors to lessen in the tannins, while allowing the field-blended portions to contribute a flavor profile we try to envision five years down the road. We also check Brix, glucose/fructose, TA, pH, malic and YAN while watching upcoming weather for heat spikes.

Grapes are hand-picked into $^{1}/_{2}$-ton T-bins. We do extensive bunch-sorting in the vineyard and again on a sorting table at the winery. Grapes are destemmed without crushing and moved to four-ton, open-top stainless-steel tanks. At destemming, 30 to 40 ppm SO_2 is added except where we are using non-*Saccharomyces* yeast for bio-protection, where we keep the addition at 15 ppm. Depending on fruit, cold soak usually lasts two to three days at 57° to 60°F. We will make organic nutrient additions (because old vines are often nitrogen-depleted) at yeast hydration, 2° to 3° Brix drop and one-third of fermentation. We will add tartaric acid, as soon as possible, to gain microbial stability if necessary.

All our wines are made in our above-ground cave, kept cool throughout the year by a living roof. We do short eight-minute pump-overs earlier in the fermentation twice per day, tapering off to once daily at the end of fermentation. We do punch downs when needed. We keep fermentation temperatures between 75 and 86°F. We press with remaining sugar, often around 1 to 3° Brix to soften the tannins. We press at basket press levels to a tank, settle overnight without separating press from free run then rack to barrel. We wait for the wine to go dry and then inoculate for malolactic in each barrel. We stir the lees twice a week.

We use 100% French oak with 20 to 25% each of new French oak, one year old, two-year-old, three-year-old and four year old if needed. Wine gets 11 months' barrel ageing, topping every three weeks. We rack off ML in October, and in winter or spring, depending on flavors and tannin development, then again in summer before bottling. Wine is cross flow-filtered, sealed with natural corks (but we will be switching to technical corks) and gets six months bottle-age before release.

Tasting Notes:

Nalle: The fruit is on point today. I'm getting aromas of wild cherry, strawberry, blackberries, crème brûlée and pomegranate. Some oak comes in and out with the dusty character of Dry Creek and some spice. The mouthfeel has a sweetness, but it is dry. It's medium light, refreshing and goes down smoothly. It's very young but finishes long and smooth. The acid melds in with some plum at the end. It's fun. Zin should be fun.

Others: Crushed red fruit with interesting spice. Light on its feet with nice freshness. Lifted fruit expresses terroir. I love this. It has a middle high point that has so much character. Elegant wine with bright fruit. Bright lifted nose of red fruit. The nose matches the palate, and the tannins are layered so they don't overpower the bright fruit. Bright red cherry, bramble, beautiful white pepper. Gentle resolved tannins with balanced acidity in the mouth. There is some sarsaparilla and vanilla, like a gentle hug from the oak.

Ridge Vineyards

2023 Lytton Springs Zinfandel

14.4% abv, 10,050 cases, $56



Shauna Rosenblum grew up playing and working in her dad's Rosenblum Cellars' winery, so the last thing she wanted was to go into the wine business. Art school was her choice, particularly ceramics and sculpture. One day while blending glazes, she had an epiphany. Mixing glazes for ceramics was like blending wine, therefore winemaking was art. She left art to work with her father and, in 2008, started her own company with him called Rock Wall Wine Company. Her father died in 2018; and when the lease came up for renewal in 2022, she opted out of renewal. That same year John Olney offered her a job at Ridge Vineyards to focus on the Lytton Springs Zinfandel.

ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

We are trying to express the site of our field-blended Lytton Springs' vineyard. We strive for balance, firm structure and texture. The field blend lends a rustic character that is completely unique. The Zinfandel shines with its fruit and spice, the Petite Sirah contributes burly black fruit which we love, and the Mataro adds a complex savory quality. We want a wine with weight on the palate, one that is full and rich, but not heavy.

There are two primary sections to our Lytton Springs' vineyard: the old eastern section planted from 1901 to 1910 and the new western section which is 25 or less years old. The soils for both are alluvial Arbuckle gravelly loam. Elevation is about 275 feet. Old vines are planted, using 8x8 foot spacings on St. George rootstock. The newer vines are spaced 8x6 feet on 1103P and 110R rootstock. We have multiple clones: 26, 27, 42, 43, as well as Heritage clones. The old vines are dry farmed, but we have irrigation in both sections if we need it. We are certified organic and produce an average of three tons per acre.

We practice standard viticulture practices in pruning, shoot-thinning, light leaf-pulling and crop adjustment if needed. It's all about timing and making informed decisions, especially if we can keep the crop balanced and slow ripening to our liking. Fruit maturity is monitored by tracking sugar accumulation/loading. The winemakers walk blocks to gauge flavors and track juice chemistry. We look for softening skin, brown seeds and the pulp pulling away from center. When we decide to pick, we isolate blocks and pick each block as one, co-fermenting all varieties.

Grapes are hand-picked at night into 1.5-ton gondolas and taken straight to the winery. Grapes get sorted in the hopper where they are crushed and destemmed. We add 35 ppm SO_2 at the crusher but thereafter measure SO_2 molecularly to ensure using the least amount of SO_2 possible. We do not cold-soak nor do we ever use nutrients. We rarely need to add tartaric acid but would do it the day after crushing if needed. We ferment in both open- and closed-top stainless-steel tanks, using native yeast. We heat the must to about 83°F and mix with air to get fermentation started. We pump-over twice daily and ferment around 85°F.

Pressing happens as soon as structure, mouthfeel and weight are in balance, usually around 2° to 3° Brix. Press and free run are mixed together in tank where native malolactic occurs. We keep the juice warm; and if ML is sluggish, we may pump over. The wine goes to barrel. We do not stir lees, but we top every two to three weeks. We use 100% American oak with 15% new. We age in barrel for 14 months, racking once about six months into ageing. We pad-filter because we believe it retains better flavor, texture and body. Bottles are sealed with natural cork and aged for nine months before release.

Tasting Notes:

Rosenblum/Olney: On the nose there is black cherry, hibiscus, pipe tobacco, vanilla sage with firm tannins and balanced acidity. Dark fruit here with plum and pepper. On the palate there is more raspberry. Chalky tannins with a lot of grip. Savory flavors from the Mataro.

Others: Love fruit notes, but darker with chocolate and citrus. Blended components make it so flavorful and complex, but not pure Zin. Shows mix of blend with darker savory tone. Nicely layered wine with good acidity. Forceful tannin profile gives lovely character. Really sweet aromatics of raspberry, pomegranate, herbs and spice. Super inviting nose that screams blueberry tart with a gentle herb kick to bring it all together. More towards plum and well balanced with good structure. Warm spices, some mint and Luxardo cherries. Super dark fruit with bright herbs and serious grip on finish, which I like a lot. Bigger than I am used to with Ridge with some drying tannins.

Martinelli Winery

2023 Vellutini Ranch Zinfandel

16.2% abv, 280 cases, $62

COURTNEY ROBINETT WAGONER GREW UP in Morgan Hill, California and wanted to be a musician. While studying Food Science at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, she took a class, "Wines and Fermented Foods," which sent her on the winemaking path. She worked at Artesa Winery, Wild Horse, Gundlach Bundschu and Alderbrook before taking over head winemaker duties at Martinelli Winery in 2017.



ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

We want this wine to be specific to the proprietary clones we have planted at Vellutini. The Jackass Hill clone provides stone fruit elegance while the Jackass Vineyard clone lends a rich, deep, herbal character. We try to create a wine that is full of texture, austere, yet full-bodied without overpowering the senses.

These vineyards are next door to Jackass Hill and Jackass Vineyard on Martinelli Road sitting at an elevation of 250 feet. The soil is Josephine and Hugo, consisting of bedrock and clay loam. Vines are spaced 1x1 meter on 420A and 3309 rootstocks with our proprietary Jackass Hill clone (planted in 1890) and Jackass Vineyard clone (planted in 1889). We have irrigation but use it only when necessary, due to drought. We are traditionally farmed, and the yield is about two tons per acre.

We absolutely drop fruit and pull leaves as necessary. These clusters are huge, sometimes one pound each. We remove shoulders and limit vines to six or seven clusters per vine. We track Brix, pH and acid for backup but primarily rely on taste. Since we never harvest before 24° Brix, I don't start tasting until then. I want the tannins to soften and lose their green character. I wait for a purity in the fruit flavors to show through.

Grapes are hand-picked at night and delivered to the winery quickly. We have already done a pre-pass sort in the vineyard and hand-sort again on a sorting table at the winery. Grapes are destemmed and pumped to open-top stainless-steel tanks after we add 40 ppm SO_2. We cold-soak for five days at 55°F to develop more color and flavor, and to reveal some juice so punch downs go easier. We use native yeast. We punch down three times a day with maximum fermentation temperature at 78°F.

We press based on taste and tannin development, usually close to 0° Brix. We look for structure but no drying tannins. We do not separate free run from press because we only press lightly. Press wine goes to a tank for a day of settling and then gets racked to barrel. We use 100% French oak barrels with 40% new. Native malolactic occurs in barrels, and we stir lees until malolactic has completed. Wine resides in barrels for 10 months on the lees. We top every other week. We rack just once before bottling. We do not filter. We use natural cork, and the wine gets 13 months' bottle age before release.

Tasting Notes:

Robinett Wagoner: On the nose I get raspberry, fresh cream and some white peaches. There is slight clove spice without overwhelming the fruit. Flavors are raspberry pie and pomegranate with balanced tannins and acidity. The lengthy finish has a spice note and some nectarine.

Others: Almost a saline, umami note on the nose. Dense, high impact with alcohol. Very indulging with dark tone. Smooth in an aromatic and textural way all the way through. Tastes like ripe plum and holds its alcohol well. I get raspberry and strawberry in the nose with a nice vanillin component. Very perfumed nose that draws you in. Supple mouthfeel. The wine showcases Zinfandel fruit. Beautiful high-tone strawberry and jam. Expansive mouth-feel with playful energy. Floral white rose aromas. I get allspice, anise and dark cherry with a lot of spice. I get some sort of yeasty baking reference that is pleasant. Takes me back to an older time of Zin making with intensity and really ripe fruit with high alcohol.

Brochelle Vineyards

2023 Estate Zinfandel

15.1% abv, 1,025 cases, $44

BROCK WATERMAN GREW UP tending fig trees and cattle on his family's property in Clovis, California, which led to his earning a degree in Agricultural Business from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. He met his future wife, Michelle, when they both worked in Sacramento. They bought property in Paso Robles, planted a vineyard and started their business. They have owned and operated Brochelle Vineyards since 1998.



ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

Our main goal is finding the balance between a wine ready for consumption now that will also lay down and age to enjoy later. We want our wine to exhibit blackberry and cherry aromas and flavors, without being overripe, while exhibiting luscious mouthfeel, balanced tannins and a long lingering finish.

Planted in 1998, our vineyard sits on calcareous, red chert soil at an elevation of 1,100 feet. Vines are planted to 7x11 foot spacings on 110R rootstock, using the Sauret clone. The vineyard is dry-farmed, and we are transitioning to fully organic practices. Production varies vintage to vintage but averages two tons per acre. We plant native grasses, then cultivate and till into the soil to help retain moisture. Depending on vintage, we drop fruit, shoot thin and pull leaves and occasionally drop shoulders to encourage even ripening.

Our primary judgment on when to pick is based on 28 years in the vineyard. We look at phenolics, seed color, pulp separation and taste. Acidity is the focus while watching pH. Brix is just along for the ride. We pick at night to take advantage of the cool temperatures and will usually do eight to 10 multiple picks of the vineyard. Grapes are picked in half-ton bins and dumped onto a sorting table to minimize some of the whole clusters and eliminate raisined fruit. Grapes are destemmed with no rollers. No SO_2 is used at the crusher. Destemmed fruit gets moved by forklift and dumped into open-top stainless-steel tanks where it undergoes a five to six day cold-soak at 40° to 50°F.

As the fruit warms up, some native yeast will start, but we add selected commercial yeast to help finish fermentation. We add vitamins before primary but never need to make acid additions. We punch down two to three times a day and will do a rack and return at 15° Brix and again around 12° Brix. We also do daily pump-overs for more extraction and to soften tannins. We try to keep fermentation temperature at 57°F.

To press, we monitor tannins, looking for soft tannins before they turn astringent. We press to tank, separating free run from press juice. Wine finishes primary in tank then gets racked to barrel. We inoculate a portion for malolactic in tank, and we allow native fermentation in barrel for the rest, stirring lees about three times over the course of malolactic fermentation. We use 70 to 80% French oak with the balance in American oak with 20 to 30% new. The wine gets racked two to three times depending on vintage and rests in barrels 15 to 18 months. We bottle unfiltered, use natural cork closures and bottle-age for three to six months before release.

Tasting Notes:

Waterman: Black briary and black cherry come to the table with an overlay of cranberry and a bit of vanilla. Good soft tannins and a lovely long finish that is indicative of the vintage with great acid that brings it back up on the end.

Others: Umami, soy and molasses with centralized tannins. Quite alluring. There is a slate note that's inviting and fresh fig and peppercorns. I get bramble Chambord and cranberry on the nose with creosote and coffee in the mouth. Earthy, cherry, berry nose. High tannin and sweet plum finish. Blackberry liquor with mushroom and strawberry with a note of honeysuckle. Soft entry, full and viscous, well-coated tannins. Beautiful color matched on the palate with deep, dark fruit, ripe cranberry and well balanced. Texturally on the palate, it is sophisticated and classy which is uncommon for Zinfandel.

J Dusi Wines

2023 Dante Dusi Vineyard Zinfandel

14.9% abv, 975 cases, $48

JANELL DUSI'S EARLIEST MEMORIES are of growing up surrounded by vineyards, driving with her Grandpa Dante in his blue truck and helping in the vineyard, which later became known for producing some of the finest Zinfandel in California. Off to college at UC Santa Barbara, Janell received a degree in Global and International Studies. She travelled through Australia, the South Pacific and Southeast Asia, before returning to Paso Robles, committed to making wine from grapes grown on her family's legendary, historic vineyard. In 2006, she started J Dusi Wines.



ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

I want to create an approachable style of Zinfandel, one that is not too jammy or high alcohol that pairs nicely with food. I want the wine to exhibit the qualities for which my family's more than 100 years of farming experience have earned its reputation. Pure Dusi, this wine shows classic cherry cola aromas, along with tart cranberry and a light, dusty chaparral character. It's a balanced wine that shows its pedigree.

The soils here are calcareous shale loam. Elevation is 800 feet, and vine spacings in the old blocks are 12x12 feet. The newer blocks are planted 8x12 feet. Rootstock is St. George and own-rooted using the same Dusi clone we planted in 1925. We farm sustainably and almost entirely dry farm although we can manually lay irrigation pipes if desperate for water. Yield averages two to two and a half tons per acre. We plant cover crops and till the organic matter to seal the moisture into the soil. We cluster-thin, pull leaves and let the second crop hang. We track pH, TA and Brix, but I was born on this vineyard, as was my father who is the grower, so we have a long history with each section of this 100-year-old vineyard that tells us when to harvest. We definitely want fruit before it raisins and pick like crazy in the face of a heat wave.

Grapes are sorted in the field and hand-harvested at night into half-ton bins. At the winery, we destem but do not crush. We'll add 10 to 20 ppm SO_2 if there are any issues, otherwise no SO_2. Grapes get forklifted to open-topped stainless-steel tanks where they cold-soak for one to two days at 55°F. Sometimes we will add organic nutrients; occasionally, we use Fermaid O. Acid additions are unnecessary. Native yeast carries out the fermentation, keeping temperatures in the 75° to 83° F range. We pump over twice a day for 20 minutes. We press at negative Brix, tasting for astringency. We separate free run and press juice but usually add it back together later.

After pressing, we settle the juice for two days then rack to barrels for native malolactic. We do not stir lees. Our barrel mix is 75% French and 25% American with 10% new barrels. We rack once post-malolactic, again to blend and a final time for bottling. Wine ages in barrel for 16 to 18 months. We bottle unfiltered, seal with natural cork and age three months in bottle before release.

Tasting Notes:

Dusi: Has a pretty color with a lot of those bramble/berry flavors and a nice subtle Christmas spice. It is pleasantly bright in the right fruit spots and full-bodied but smooth, with pure blackberry showing through on the finish.

Others: Iconic Paso Zin. Has black cherry and plums and perfect structure, but also has a pretty rose petal aroma on the nose. Lovely juicy fruit without being over-extracted. I like the bramble fruit on the nose. There is richness, spice and citrus zest on the nose. It's inviting from the beginning with a round mid-palate. It's elegant for the style. This is like an old Dunhill shop with tobacco, tea and dried roses. Very dark fruit flavors. I get herbs, oak and cherries. The mouth is dark and sweet with a balsamic finish. I get aromas of blackberry and plum with flavors of persimmons and cloves. Fully extracted, ripe dense fruit with chalky tannins which incorporate into the fruit with enough acidity to give the wine definition.

Tobin James Cellars

2022 Silver Reserve Zinfandel

15.8% abv, 2,400 cases, $52

LANCE AND CLAIRE SILVER MET at the University of Nevada. Las Vegas, where both were in the Hotel Administration program. After graduating, they started a tremendously successful women's clothing company which they ran for 10 years. The job involved loads of entertaining, and they developed an extensive wine cellar and a love of wine. Looking for their next business venture, they opted for the wine business. In 1996, they became 50/50 partners in the small Tobin James Cellars in Paso Robles. Lance worked, as winemaker, for three years, before passing that along to a full-time winemaker, while he and Claire focused on growing the winery to its current 80,000 cases annually. They both still work together to determine the blends for every Tobin James wine.



ACCORDING TO THE WINEMAKER:

In general, our winery style is one of big, extracted, elegant red wines. We make eight different Zinfandels, most of them in our house style. This Silver Reserve Zinfandel is intended to be different. We accomplish this by selectively blending from more than 25 separate Zinfandel vineyards. Working with fully ripe fruit, we attempt to keep the typical Paso Robles' jammy flavors in control while enhancing the herbal and brambly aspects of the grape. This results in a wine that is a bit more austere and very food friendly.

This wine is a blend of multiple vineyards: all planted in calcareous fractured shale and limestone soils. Elevations vary from 800 to 1,600 feet, and every vineyard has different plant spacings. The bulk of the vines are on St. George or 1103P rootstock. There are multiple clones, many of them Heritage or proprietary clones, and 60% of our Zinfandel comes from vineyards 40 years old or older. We have both irrigated and dry-farmed vineyards, but even the irrigated vineyards are very judicious about using water. The vineyards utilize a wide variety of farming methods, but are all moving to organic and certified organic farming. Production averages two to three tons per acre, depending on the vineyard.

Most of our vineyards are owned by very experienced growers, so we allow them to farm the way they think best. Typically, that involves fruit thinning, some leaf pulling and a green fruit drop, as well as focusing on soil health. On many of the historic pedigreed vineyards, we rely on the growers to make the picking call, but on those we control ourselves we follow the chemistry and look for brown seeds that readily separate from the pulp with sugars in the 25 ° to 26° Brix range.

All grapes are hand-picked into half-ton bins and delivered to the winery where they are destemmed and lightly crushed. We add 40 ppm SO_2 at the crusher and pump to closed stainless steel tanks. Our grapes cold soak for 24 hours at 55°F; then we inoculate with yeast selected for the individual vineyard or lot of grapes to enhance the qualities we seek. Organic nitrogen is added between 18° to 20° Brix and inorganic nitrogen at 16° to 18° Brix. We pump over twice daily with a venturi during primary fermentation and will perform a splash racking at the beginning of fermentation. We try to keep fermentations in the 65° to 75°F range.

We press the juice at dryness, separating free run from press juice, and go to a tank for settling and to finish primary fermentation. We inoculate for malolactic and go to barrel using 100% neutral French oak. We rack after malolactic when making an SO_2 addition then again before blending and finally to bottle. Wine ages 15 to 18 months in barrel, and we top every two months. The wine is cross flow- and sterile-filtered, sealed with natural cork and spends one to three years in bottle prior to release.

Tasting Notes:

Silver: Vibrant ruby red. There is ripe dark chocolate-covered cherry, olallieberry, brambles and wild fennel on the nose. The complex palate has wild blackberry, rich holiday spice notes, anise, white pepper and delicate underbrush. It is medium-bodied, bright and lively and finishes with very smooth tannins.

Others: Integrated and unctuous with red and black fruit. I like the tannin structure and the controlled oak on this. The fruit is uplifted by the oak. There is a red fruit core, with darker fruits surrounding it. A judicious amount of oak adds an interesting spice, and the red fruit core travels all the way to the finish. Very nice job with a tough vintage. Light raspberry and petrichor minerality and cranberry flavors. Sweet earthiness with raspberry and a hint of cranberry, baking spice and a bit of cinnamon at the finish. A broad mouthfeel of ripe red fruit with Mexican mole spice. Fun wine. Dark cherry cola but screaming all the spices with light tannins and no jammy fruit. Especially for the vintage, this has dustiness and sage with great mouthfeel.

Conclusion

Seemingly, Zinfandel can be grown anywhere in a wide variety of soils and climatic conditions. Wherever it is grown, Zinfandel does not produce shy, subtle wines. There is an exuberance to Zinfandel, along with warmth and vitality in its fruity lusciousness. It is more likely to be brash, bursting with fruit aromas and flavors decorated with a wild bramble/herbal character and carried by enough alcohol to convince you to call an Uber rather than drive home.

In spite of producing robust, juicy wines, Zinfandel requires an attentive hand in the vineyard. The grapes and bunches are large, but the skins are thin. Depending on weather conditions, the tight bunches are as likely to rot as they are to raisin. They tend to be wildly uneven in ripening, often demanding multiple passes through the vineyard for dropping shoulders, removing crowded bunches and pulling leaves. In the winery, Zinfandel's abundant sugar can produce high alcohol, making fermentations hard to finish, leading to VA and other issues. Working through this minefield of issues attracts a certain type of winemaker, one confident enough to tackle the variety yet still secretly relieved when it all works out.

Not only is Zinfandel ubiquitous, but it has also been here for a long time. Gnarled, head-pruned vines can be seen in vineyards all over the state, standing like dinosaurs amongst modern vineyards. Head-pruned or not, Zinfandel has history. All nine wineries that participated in this Varietal Focus can claim to be using "old vine" Zinfandel. Old vines produce fewer grapes which concentrate flavor, better resist drought conditions and, more consistently, achieve physiological ripeness. They can be counted on to make intense wine that reflects terroir year after year.

Given the pressure of corporate takeovers, accountants' algorithms of production and profit, and dropping red wine consumption, old vines are a threatened species. Historically, Zinfandel has shown a knack for surviving the forces that threaten its very existence. Back in the 1980s, when most everyone was t-budding vines to Chardonnay, Zinfandel even disguised itself as Rosé until it was safe to come back as the big, bold red wines they were intended to be.

There is an axiom in the wine business: vines aren't good because they are old; they're old because they are good. The producers in this Varietal Focus show experience with and gratitude for high-quality old vines. They also exhibit an understanding and willingness to do what is needed to coax the very best from the grapes. These wines represent a wide variety of styles, but each respects the vines and allows them to tell their story in a delicious way.

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Varietal Focus: Zinfandel

	ROBERT BIALE VINEYARDS	TRES SABORES	TITUS VINEYARDS
Wine	2023 Black Chicken Zinfandel	2023 Rutherford Zinfandel	2023 Napa Valley Zinfandel
Blend	100% Zinfandel	100% Zinfandel	92% Zinfandel, 8% Petite Sirah
Winemaker	David Natali	Julie Johnson	Stephen Cruzan
Style goals	We are focused on building a wine whose core showcases the generosity and plushness of fruit that Zinfandel is known for.	Create an impression of layered elegance in our Zinfandel, instead of the "fruit bomb" style.	Create a wine that expresses the flavor profile of our nearly 50-year-old Zinfandel vineyard. Want a balance of fruit intensity and structure that shows finesse.
AVA	Oak Knoll District	Rutherford	Napa Valley
Vineyard	Home Ranch	Estate vineyard	Estate vineyard
VINEYARD DATA			
Predominant geology (soil type)	Gravelly loam	Alluvial fan, silty and clay loam	Alluvial sandy loam
Elevation	30-130 feet	100-225 feet	215 feet
Vine spacing	7x5, 8x6 and 8x8 feet	8x10 feet	10x8 feet
Rootstock	110R and 1103P	St. George	St. George
Clones	Heritage selections	Werle	DuPratt
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	One-third dry-farmed, rest irrigated	Dry-farmed	Dry-farmed
Farming (organic, Biodynamic, traditional)	Sustainably farmed, use of organic practices	CCOF and Napa Green certified	Conventional
Production	3 tons per acre	2.5 tons per acre	4 tons per acre
When to pick	Signals are softening of the skins and a shift in the perception of malic acid, along with seed ripeness	Look for the flavor to turn to that almost ripe cherry, like fresh, piquant olallieberry	Look for even ripening and flavor development, watching for heat spikes
Vineyard practices	Pull leaves and laterals, bunch closure, remove all wings and shoulders, green drop at 80-90% veraison	Vary cover crops, use insectaries, biochar, no tilling, cordon pruned and thinned to 2 buds per spur, selectively leaf	No cover crops, disc between rows, pull laterals with minimal defoliation
WINEMAKING DATA			
Sort	Cluster-sort on table	At harvest bin and again at table	Optically sorted post-destem
SO_2	30-40 ppm at destemmer	None	50 ppm
Crush, destem, press	Destemmed with no crushing	Destemmed with no crushing	Destemmed
Cold soak	3-5 days at 50°-55° F	At ambient temperature until fermentation begins	3 day cold soak at 55° F
Yeast	Various commercial strains	Native, primarily	RP 15
Nutrients	60% from organic nitrogen sources and 40% from blended organic/inorganic sources	Nutristart	DAP at inoculation and at one-third Brix depletion; Fermaid K
Acid addition	N/A	Tartaric	Tartaric
Fermentation temperature	85° F max	78°-88° F	90° F max
Cap management	Punch-down 2-3 times daily, one aerative pump-over at 10°-12° Brix	Gentle punch-downs 2-3 times daily, tapering off as fermentation finishes	Pump-overs: half tank volume daily during cold soak, 1-2 volumes daily during fermentation
Tank types	Open-top, 4- to 10-ton fermentors	T bins	Stainless steel
Barrels used	100% French; 30% new	100% French oak; 30% new, 30% first-year, post-white wine	15% new French barrels, 15% new American oak, 70% neutral
Malolactic	Inoculated	Inoculated	CH16
Racking	Immediately after ML inoculation and at 6 months post-press	Twice	Post ML and again pre-bottling
Barrel aging	15 months	20 months	11 months
Filtration	Crossflow and sterile-filtered	Cuno then sterile-filter	Pad-filtered to 0.65 microns
Closure	Natural cork	Natural cork	Natural cork
Bottle age before release	4 months	4 months	4 months



Varietal Focus: Zinfandel

	NALLE WINERY	RIDGE VINEYARDS	MARTINELLI WINERY
Wine	2023 Dry Creek Valley Old Vine Zinfandel	2023 Lytton Springs Zinfandel	2023 Vellutini Ranch Zinfandel
Blend	92% Zinfandel, 5% Petite Sirah, 3% Carignane	76% Zinfandel, 14% Petite Sirah, 7% Carignane, 2% Alicante Bouschet, 1% Mataro	100% Zinfandel
Winemaker	Andrew Nalle	Shauna Rosenblum	Courtney Robinett Wagoner
Style goals	Want a balanced wine with moderate alcohol and a moderate presence of French oak, along with a smooth mouth-feel and finish. Less is more.	Strive for balance, firm structure and texture. The field blend lends a rustic character that is completely unique.	Want this wine to be specific to the proprietary clones we have planted at Vellutini.
AVA	Dry Creek Valley	Dry Creek Valley	Dry Creek Valley
Vineyard	Estate vineyard	Lytton Springs Vineyard	Velluntini Ranch
VINEYARD DATA			
Predominant geology (soil type)	Arbuckle gravelly loam	Arbuckle gravelly loam	Bedrock and clay loam
Elevation	315 feet	275 feet	250 feet
Vine spacing	8x8 feet	8x8 feet for old vines, 8x6 feet for new	1x1 meter
Rootstock	St. George	St. George for old vines, 1103P and 110R for new	420A and 3309
Clones	Too old to know	26, 27, 42, 43, Heritage	Proprietary Jackass Hill and Jackass Vineyard clones
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Dry-farm	Old vines are dry-farmed	Irrigation available during drought
Farming (organic, Biodynamic, traditional)	Follow Lodi Rules, sustainable organic practices	Certified Organic	Conventional
Production	Just under 4 tons per acre	3 tons per acre	2 tons per acre
When to pick	Taste for flavor and tannin ripeness, waiting for green and bitter flavors to lessen in the tannins, while allowing the field-blended portions to contribute a flavor profile	Look for softening skin, brown seeds and the pulp pulling away from center	Track Brix, pH and acid for backup but primarily rely on taste; want the tannins to soften and lose their green character
Vineyard practices	Cover crops are tilled back to soil, use compost teas twice a year, owl boxes, drop fruit or remove shoulders when needed, leaves pulled on morning side	Pruning, shoot-thinning, light leaf-pulling and crop adjustment if needed	Drop fruit and pull leaves as necessary, remove shoulders and limit to six or seven clusters
WINEMAKING DATA			
Sort	Bunch-sorting in vineyard and at table	Sorted in hopper	Pre-pass in vineyard, again at table
SO_2	30-40 pmm at destemming	35 ppm at crusher	40 ppm
Crush, destem, press	Destemmed with no crushing	Crushed and destemmed	Destemmed only
Cold soak	2-3 days at 57°-60° F	None	5 days at 55° F
Yeast	Non-*Saccharomyces*, commercial	Native	Native
Nutrients	Organic nutrients at yeast hydration	None	None
Acid addition	Tartaric	Rarely add tartaric	None
Fermentation temperature	75°-86° F	83°-85° F	Max 78°
Cap management	Twice daily 8-minute pump-overs at start, once daily at end of fermentation	Pump-over twice daily	Punch-down 3 times daily
Tank types	4-ton, open-top stainless steel	Open- and closed-top stainless steel	Open-top stainless steel
Barrels used	100% French oak; 20-25% each of new, one-, two-, and three-year-old	100% American oak, 15% new	100% French oak, 40% new
Malolactic	Inoculated in barrel	Inoculated in barrel	Native in barrel
Racking	In October and again in Spring	Once 6 months into aging	Once before bottling
Barrel aging	11 months	14 months	10 months on lees
Filtration	Crossflow-filtered	Pad-filtered	None
Closure	Natural cork	Natural cork	Natural cork
Bottle age before release	6 months	9 months	13 months



Varietal Focus: Zinfandel

	BROCHELLE VINEYARDS	J DUSI WINES	TOBIN JAMES CELLARS
Wine	2023 Estate Zinfandel	2023 Dante Dusi Vineyard Zinfandel	2022 Silver Reserve Zinfandel
Blend	100% Zinfandel	100% Zinfandel	100% Zinfandel
Winemaker	Brock Waterman	Janell Dusi	Lance and Claire Silver
Style goals	Finding the balance between a wine ready for consumption now that will also lay down and age to enjoy later.	Create an approachable style of Zinfandel, one that is not too jammy or high alcohol that pairs nicely with food.	Our winery style is one of big, extracted, elegant red wines.
AVA	Adelaida District	Templeton Gap	Paso Robles
Vineyard	Estate	Dante Dusi	Multiple
VINEYARD DATA			
Predominant geology (soil type)	Calcareous, red chert soil	Calcareous shale loam	Calcareous fractured shale and limestone
Elevation	1,100 feet	800 feet	800-1,600 feet
Vine spacing	7x11 feet	8x12 feet	Varied
Rootstock	110R	St. George and own-rooted	St. George or 1103P
Clones	Sauret	Dusi clone	Variety of Heritage and proprietary
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Dry-farmed	Almost entirely dry-farmed	Both
Farming (organic, Biodynamic, traditional)	Transitioning to fully organic practices	Sustainably farmed	All moving to organic and certified organic
Production	2 tons per acre	2-2.5 tons per acre	2-3 tons per acre
When to pick	Look at phenolics, seed color, pulp separation and taste; acidity is focus while watching pH	Want fruit before it raisins and pick like crazy in the face of a heat wave	Rely on the growers to make the picking call, but on those we control, we follow the chemistry and look for brown seeds that readily separate from the pulp
Vineyard practices	Plant native grasses then cultivate and till into soil; drop fruit, shoot thin and pull leaves if needed	Plant cover crops and till to soil, cluster-thin, pull leaves, let second crop hang	Varies based on vineyard; usually involves fruit thinning, some leaf pulling and a green fruit drop
WINEMAKING DATA			
Sort	Sorting table	In vineyard	N/A
SO_2	None	10-20 ppm	40 ppm
Crush, destem, press	Destemmed with no rollers	Destemmed with no crushing	Destemmed and lightly crushed
Cold soak	5-6 days at 40°-50° F	1-2 days at 55° F	24 hours at 55° F
Yeast	Native and commercial	Native	Commercial based on vineyard
Nutrients	Vitamins before primary	Organic nutrients, sometimes Fermaid O	Organic nitrogen
Acid addition	Never	Never	N/A
Fermentation temperature	57° F	75°-83° F	65°-75° F
Cap management	Punch-down 2-3 times daily	Pump-over twice daily for 20 minutes	Pump-over twice daily
Tank types	Open-top stainless steel	Open-top stainless steel	Closed stainless steel
Barrels used	70-80% French oak, remaining American; 20-30% new	75% French oak, 25% American; 10% new	100% neutral French oak
Malolactic	Inoculate a portion	Native	Incoculated
Racking	Racked to barrel, then 2-3 times based on vintage	Rack to barrels, once post-ML, at blending and at bottling	Aftter ML, before blending, and at bottling
Barrel aging	15-18 months	16-18 months	15-18 months
Filtration	None	None	Crossflow and sterile-filtered
Closure	Natural cork	Natural cork	Natural cork
Bottle age before release	3-6 months	3 months	1-3 years