

# *2003 Dashe Cellars*

## *Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As always, our 2003 Dry Creek zinfandel is a special combination of brawniness and elegance. Inky black in color, the wine exhibits the black raspberry fruit and chocolate that is the hallmark of zinfandels from this special climate and soil. In 2003, the growing conditions slowly ripened the grapes until just before harvest—then a sudden long-lasting heat spell pushed the ripeness of the grapes to the maximum. The heat spell pushed the ripe flavors of the fruit, adding flavors of plum and cassis to the ever-present black raspberry fruit. Luscious and mouthfilling, the wine is poised to last for many years.

### **PRODUCTION**

We created a jet black wine using our special custom-made gridded tanks—a method of winemaking that is relatively rare in California. These stainless-steel grids can be raised or lowered on top of the crushed grapes, allowing us to submerge the cap of grape skins beneath the surface of the fermenting wine. Using these grids we can extract more color, body, and complexity from the grapes, without extracting too much of the drying tannins found in the seeds. The result are intense and complex wines that feel velvety and round on the tongue rather than harsh or tannic.

As is our tradition, we conduct the fermentation using only the natural yeast population on the grapes. During fermentation the temperature was allowed to get above 90° F, to aid in the extraction of color and flavor. At dryness, the wine was gently pressed in a membrane press and pumped to small, 60-gallon barrels.

The wine was aged for 14 months in a mixture of French oak and American oak barrels, with about 18% of the wine aged in new oak. Every three months we raked the wine out of barrel to clarify the wine and aid in its development. In our blending trials, we added small amounts of both petite sirah (for structure and aging potential) and carignane (for a round texture and lovely raspberry fruit) in the wine. As the wine aged, it deepened in color and developed a complexity and firm structure that we believe will help the wine improve with up to eight years of bottle age.

### **PRODUCTION NOTES**

Varietals: 90% Zinfandel, 5% Petite Sirah, 5% Carignane  
Appellation: Dry Creek Valley  
Sonoma County  
Alcohol: 14.5 % by vol.  
Time in oak: 14 months  
Oak: 30% French & 70% American; 18% new

Production: 3875 cases, 750mL  
120 cases, 375mL  
Release date: May 15, 2005  
Sugg. retail price: \$22.00 bottle, 750mL  
\$12.00 bottle, 375mL

Optimum time for consumption: 2005-2011

### **TASTING NOTES**

**Color:** Dark purple-black.  
**Aroma:** Intense black raspberry, chocolate, lavender perfume, clove, black pepper.  
**Taste:** Plum, cassis, black raspberry fruit, chocolate and vanilla, clove spice, thick and velvety texture on the mid-palate, long sweet finish of black raspberry fruit, sweet chocolate and spice.