

2002 Dashe Cellars

Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel

INTRODUCTION

This is one of the darkest, biggest, most velvety-textured and intensely fruit-dominated Dry Creek zinfandels we have ever produced. We can't take all the credit ourselves—the weather in the 2002 vintage cooperated with us in ways that we only see once in three or four years. The vintage was quite hot during the days and cooled down at night due to evening fog rolling through the valley. This combination of hot days and cold nights created grapes that were intensely rich and ripe in flavor while still maintaining the acidity that keeps the wine from being thick or cloying. This is what Dry Creek Valley is all about, allowing us to produce intense, complex, yet balanced zinfandels through a unique combination of soil and climate.

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: 86% Zinfandel, 8% Petite Sirah, 6% 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: 4050 cases, 750mL
290 cases, 375mL

Release date: April 1, 2004

Suggested retail price: \$22.00 bottle, 750mL
\$12.00 bottle, 375mL

Optimum time for consumption: 2004-2010

TASTING NOTES

Color: Dark purple-black.

Aroma: Intense black raspberry, chocolate, lavender perfume, clove, black pepper.

Taste: Blackberry and raspberry fruit, chocolate and vanilla, clove spice, thick and velvety texture on the mid-palate, long sweet finish of raspberry fruit, sweet chocolate and spice.