

2007 Dashe Cellars

Zinfandel Late Harvest

Dry Creek Valley

HISTORY

For most of this decade we've made Late Harvest Zinfandels from the great Lily Hill vineyard at Bella Winery (where Mike is the consulting winemaker). The shallow, rocky soils on the steep hills of this vineyard make the vines struggle, which in turn help the vines create very concentrated, complex grapes. One of the reasons that we love this vineyard for Late Harvest zinfandel is the wonderful acidity of the grapes. Even when we wait an extra four weeks or so to harvest the grapes (the average time that we need to leave the grapes to have them turn into Late Harvest) the grapes maintain their acidity. The resulting wine is always focused and clear--it's never cloying, and always finishes with a crisp, clean, sweet note.

The 2007 vintage was a year tailor made for the creation of Late Harvest wines. The long harvest season and moderate crop levels let us keep the grapes out on the vine long into October, and the grapes were able to concentrate their fruit evenly. When we finally picked the fruit, it was remarkably consistent—concentrated and just slightly wrinkled, but not raisined.

This year's wine is more reminiscent of our wildly popular 2005 vintage of Late Harvest Zinfandel in its concentration and sweetness. The wine is extremely aromatic with spicy black pepper, cassis, and black raspberry flavors. In the mouth, the wine shows explosive raspberry and cherry flavors, a thick, viscose mouthfeel, and a very clean, persistent, sweet finish that almost is reminiscent of cherry kirsch.

PRODUCTION

As always, it's always a nail-biter to get Late Harvest Zinfandel in before any rain hits the grapes so late in the season. We harvested in time, and the grapes arrived at the winery just over 40° Brix.

We crushed the grapes to a small 1,500-gallon tank and fermented using the native yeasts on the grapes. Since the grapes were super ripe, the fermentation roared off at the start, and then rapidly slowed as the yeast created over 10% alcohol. The fermentation finally sputtered to a halt when the alcohol had reached about 14 percent and the sugar level was 12 percent—a sweeter Late Harvest than the previous vintage.

As is our tradition, the wine was aged in older French oak barrels to not overpower the intensity of the fruit. During our blending trials, we decided to stay with our tradition of bottling the wine as soon as possible to maintain its fresh fruit flavors and conserve its lovely sweet concentration and purity. The wine is unfinned and received minimal handling to the bottle.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Varietals: 100% Zinfandel
Appellation: Dry Creek Valley
Sonoma County
Alcohol: 14.1% by vol.
Residual Sugar: 12 %
Time in oak: 5 months
Oak: 100% French; no new oak
Production: 949 cases, 375mL
Release date: June 1, 2008
Sugg. retail: \$24.00 bottle, 375mL

TASTING NOTES

Color: Black-purple.
Aroma: Floral hints of lavender, raspberry, hints of dried fruits (apricot, plums), blackberry, cocoa, vanilla.
Flavors: Cherry and black raspberry, black currant, plum, and hints of cherry, chocolate, and vanilla. The explosive fruit is balanced with nice acidity, making the wine sweet but not cloying—an ideal dessert wine.