

2008 Dashe Cellars Zinfandel Late Harvest Dry Creek Valley

HISTORY

Once again, our Late Harvest Zinfandel from the Lily Hill vineyard in northern Dry Creek Valley turned out to be as intense, complex, and most importantly, balanced, as we desired. Made entirely from grapes grown on the shallow, rocky soils of this steep vineyard owned by Bella Winery, the environment makes the vines struggle to survive, 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-spicy note.

The 2008 vintage produced fewer clusters and grapes than normal, resulting in a very dark—and very complex—wine. A blast of heat at the end of the harvest really pushed the sweetness of the fruit, making for a particularly intense and luscious Late Harvest Zin.

PRODUCTION

As always, it's always a nail-biter to get Late Harvest Zinfandel in so late in the season. We harvested in late October, and the grapes arrived at the winery well over 40° Brix of sugar.

We crushed the grapes to a small 1,500-gallon tank and as is our tradition, we 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—quite sweet.

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: 915 cases, 375mL
Release date: January 1, 2010
Sugg. retail: \$24.00 bottle, 375Ml

TASTING NOTES

Color: Ruby-purple.
Aroma: Black pepper spice mixed with an intense floral note of lavender and violets. Black raspberry, hints of dried fruits (apricot, plums), blackberry, cocoa, vanilla.
Flavors: Black raspberry, black currant, plum, and hints of chocolate and vanilla. Quite spicy, with black pepper and clove spice the dominant flavors. The explosive fruit is balanced with nice acidity, making the wine sweet but not cloying—an ideal dessert wine.