

2011 Dashe Cellars

McFadden Farm “Les Enfants Terribles”

100% Zinfandel; Native Yeast Fermentation

HISTORY

We always like to start out talking about this wine by stating that it doesn't fit the classic image of a California wine. From start to finish, it is unusual in character: lower in alcohol, unfinned, low in SO₂, fermented using native yeasts found on the grapes, organically grown. We love it—it is light in color but rich in flavor, has great balance and beautiful acidity, and goes with a wide range of foods. With patience, it evolves into a remarkably beautiful wine.

Beneath the light and lovely fresh strawberry fruit, the wine shows earthiness and minerality, making the wine complex and compelling. Although light in approach, the wine has a velvety thickness on the palate that is attractive.

The vineyard is in a cooler wine region—a section of Potter Valley in Mendocino with warm days and quite cool nights. It was the first wine in our series of wines we call “Les Enfants Terribles”—the rebel children—to highlight its unorthodox flavor profile.

PRODUCTION

The 2011 vintage was a challenging vintage for late-ripening grapes, and this is one of our most late-ripening vineyards. Cool weather and an occasional rainstorm made for a very late harvest—but luckily, also resulted in a wine with lower than normal alcohol of 13.6%. The finished product ended up with beautiful delicate fruit, a light reddish color, and a beautiful texture to balance the fruit.

This is a wine that by design is totally natural from start to finish. The grapes are organically grown by the talented grape-grower Guinness McFadden, and had almost no additions to the vineyard except for elemental sulfur. It was fermented using the native yeasts on the grapes in a stainless steel tank, and aged in large-format French oak barrels.

The unusual ripening conditions made for a very small crop of grapes, reducing our production from its normal 500 cases down to 202 cases. We sorted the fruit on a conveyor belt before destemming, to ensure that only the finest grapes reached the tank for fermentation. The berries were destemmed but not crushed, so that we would get the lovely fruit of a semi-carbonic maceration. The native yeasts conducted the fermentation, and we racked the wine to 500 liter French oak puncheons for aging. After five months in barrel, we racked the wine up to tank for bottling.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Varietals: 100% Zinfandel (even though it tastes like Gamay!)

Appellation: Potter Valley, Mendocino County

Alcohol: 13.6% by vol.

Time in oak: 5 months, in 500 liter French oak barrels

Production: 202 cases, 750mL

Release date: June 9th, 2012

Sugg. retail price: \$24.00 bottle, 750mL

TASTING NOTES

Color : Ruby red

Aroma: Beautiful wild strawberry nose, with undercurrents of cassis and black cherry. Fresh earth, minerals, spicy white pepper..

Taste: Entry is of beautiful wild strawberry fruit, balanced with firm acidity. Velvety texture, very juicy and light on the tongue. Spicy, complex, full of mineral and earthy notes. Finish of wild strawberry and white pepper spice. Clean, lingering fresh fruit finish.