

# Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S QUARTERLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

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## Zinfandel – THE SURVIVOR VARIETAL



A lot of false information gets tossed out there regarding Zinfandel from those who know what they're talking about or those who believe they know what they are talking about. "It's originally from California, no it's from Italy... It's a different varietal from Italian Primitivo, no it's the same... White Zinfandel is made from a different varietal than red Zinfandel wines... It's only grown in California... It's not able to be grown in Monterey County... All of the old Zinfandel vines were pulled up long ago in California."

Let's start with the grape's origin. The varietal has been grown in California since the mid-1800s and is one of the state's oldest varietals. But the varietal is not native to California. It was brought during the Gold Rush days. It could

have come from Italian immigrants, who knew the grape by a different name – Primitivo, named after the varietal's tendency to ripen earlier. (Yup, they are the same, and the varietal had been grown in Italy's Apulia region - the "heel" of the country - for at least a hundred years prior to its introduction to the New World).

But the grape is not native to Italy either. The varietal can be traced to what is now Croatia, and is called either Crljenak Kastelanski or Tribidrag. And it could have been brought to California by Austrian immigrants. They were familiar with the varietal as the Austro-Hungarian empire encompassed Croatia. The Austrians created a new name for the varietal, and that name is similar in appearance and pronunciation to Zinfandel.

Regardless of how it arrived in California, there is no doubt that once the varietal was here it found a new home in a big way. Some of the oldest vines in the state are Zinfandel planted in Amador, Lodi, and Napa. For a period in the 19th century, it's believed that Zinfandel was the most widely planted varietal in the state.

Zinfandel historically was used as a blending varietal. The grape was widely planted in large Central Valley vineyards and remains planted there to this day. Zinfandel continues to be used for mass production wines (in both red and pinkish form – see below) and is the third most widely planted varietal in the state after Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.

This represents roughly 80% of the planted Zinfandel in the state, leaving the remaining 20% to be grown as higher quality Zinfandel varietal wines and blends. But, of course, we can't not address the wine that those of the baby boomer generation most associate with Zinfandel.

White Zinfandel – the pinkish form of Zinfandel wine – is in fact produced from the same grape and accounts for around 10 percent of wine sales in the United States. Even though White Zin wines are considered to be more varietal driven and less sweet than in the past, these wines will always be considered in the non-serious wine category. However, it's due to the popularity of these blush wines that some of the old Zinfandel vines outside of the Central Valley were saved and not ripped out to plant other varietals.

These days, US producers are making a full spectrum of wines with the Zinfandel grape, ranging from blushes, lighter reds, huge hearty reds, and port-style fortified wines. The varietal is grown around the country, but is most prominent in Californian vineyards. Places like Amador, Lodi, Paso Robles, Napa, and Sonoma all produce exceptional Zinfandel wines, with each growing area often exhibiting differing varietal and terroir characteristics. And, yes, it is very possible to grow Zinfandel and produce excellent wines from the varietal in Monterey County. Craftwork and Shale Canyon are both currently producing Zinfandels that will match up to any in the state.

Speaking of wine styles, there are a few common Zinfandel flavor profiles. Zinfandel wines from cooler growing areas tend to have more red berry flavors such as raspberries and strawberries,



*Continued Inside*

# RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

## PESSAGNO - 2013 *Four Boys Pinot Noir*



**Winery:** Pessagno Winery fulfills a twenty-year dream to produce limited quantities of exclusive luxury wines from prestigious single vineyards throughout Monterey and San Benito Counties. The winery is known for creating wines of distinct character and elegance. It will forever prosper as one of California's finest wine sources.

**Winemaking:** The grapes were only lightly crushed into small fermentors, in which nearly 40% of the berries were left whole. A Burgundian yeast culture, known for bold flavors and aromas, as well as native yeast was used for fermentation. Allowed to barrel age "sur lees" and occasionally stirred for eleven months, this wine possesses stylish complexity.

**Tasting Notes:** The best SLH barrels of the 2013 vintage! This dark ruby red wine has rich aromas of bright fruit and candied cherry. Its full, lush mouth follows with layers of dark cherry, plum and cola. Beautifully balanced, it has a long intense finish of cherry and vanilla flavors that dance on your palate, begging for another sip.

**Pessagno**  
2013 4 Boys  
Pinot Noir

**Alcohol**  
14.5%

**AVA**  
Santa Lucia Highlands

**Composition**  
100% Pinot Noir

**Cases Produced**  
150

**Aging Potential**  
5-6 years

## JOULLIAN - 2014 *Roger Rose Chardonnay*



**Vineyard:** 2014 marked another California drought year, but the deep roots in our growers' 20-40 year old Santa Lucia Highlands and Arroyo Seco Chardonnay vines helped set a balanced crop and develop a verdant canopy that insured even ripening during a blast of very hot late September heat. The vintage's hallmark is the juicy lime/ citrus and mineral nose and flavor profile.

**Winemaking:** All the wine was barrel fermented with multiple Burgundian yeast strains and Joullian encouraged simultaneous malolactic fermentation in half the wine to minimize one dimensional butterscotch-ml flavors and boost natural fruit, spice, texture and vineyards "terroir" characteristics. Only tight grained French oak barrels were used from stave wood that is cured 3 years to reduce overt "oakiness" while enhancing bouquet, fruit, typicity and mouth feel. The 2014 Chardonnay is simply a delicious combination of experienced grape growers, winemakers, and coopers keeping quality foremost in mind.

**Tasting Notes:** Brilliant, straw-gold color. Vibrant, perfumy Asian pear, Fuji apple, citrus blossom and roasted grain-hazelnut perfume the nose. Ripe lychee, Fuji apple, pear and white nectarine flavors melt into a "silky" textured mid-palate that finishes with nuances of crème brulee and a perfectly toasted baguette. Cellar through 2020 @ 55°F.

**Joullian**  
2014 Roger Rose  
Chardonnay

**Alcohol**  
14.2%

**AVA**  
Arroyo Seco

**Composition**  
100% Chardonnay

**Cases Produced**  
125

**Aging Potential**  
6-7 years

## SCHEID - 2012 *Cabernet Sauvignon*



**Winemaking:** The grapes were handpicked, destemmed and crushed into small bins for fermentation. Fermentation was carried out in small lot, open-top fermenters. The cap was punched down 3 times per day at the height of fermentation to gently increase extraction of color and phenolic compounds. The juice was racked clean to barrels for secondary malolactic fermentation and aging. Barrel aged for 20 months, each lot was tasted and individual barrels were selected for inclusion in the final blend. The wine is bottled unfiltered, in order to preserve the tannin structure and aromatics

**Vineyard:** The Cabernet grapes were sourced from our estate San Lucas and Hames Valley Vineyards. San Lucas is a postcard-perfect vineyard, with gorgeous rolling topography, sunshine-filled days, and cool nights. Hames is located at the southern edge of Monterey County and has a climate characterized by a high day-to-night temperature differential, with a variation of up to 50° quite common. Each vintage, these two vineyard sites duke it out for the Cabernet title, with San Lucas getting the edge in our 2012 blend.

**Tasting Notes:** A dark, structured wine brimming with aromas of black fruit and plum with notes of vanilla and oak and a hint of tobacco. Full-bodied layers of blackberry and blueberry are framed by elegant tannins and a slight herbal note on the finish. Rich, soft and round, this wine has beautiful structure and vibrancy that will allow it to age for a decade or more.

**Scheid**  
2012 Cabernet  
Sauvignon

**Alcohol**  
14.1%

**AVA**  
Monterey

**Composition**  
100% Cabernet  
Sauvignon

**Cases Produced**  
614

**Aging Potential**  
8-10 years



Cover Article Continued



and warmer climate areas produce wines with pronounced blackberry, anise, and pepper aromas. Regardless of where produced, Zinfandel wines can be expected to be bold and full bodied wines. As the grapes have high sugar content, the wines will normally also have high alcohol content.

Zinfandel grapes are not considered to be exceptional difficult to grow compared to other varieties. However, the thin-skinned grapes are prone to bunch rot and early ripening, both of which can present viticultural and winemaking challenges.

As for food pairing, big juicy jammy Zinfandel wines are perfect matches with barbeque and hearty meat meals. Barbeque ribs, beef, lamb, sausages...there's really nothing too bold to match with Zinfandel. Lighter style Zins can do well with poultry dishes, and both would pair well with pasta dishes. Zinfandel's wide pairing range also allows it to be paired with more difficult dishes to match with red wine such as chili, stews, or pizza.

Regardless of where the grape originated or the path it has taken to end up in our vineyards, on our shelves, and in our cellars...Zinfandel has proven itself to be a survivor and a varietal we are pleased to have planted in Monterey County.

***Bryce Ternet** - is a contributing editor and is the author of: "The Stevenson Plan, A Novel of the Monterey Peninsula."*

## RECIPE

### Braised Venison with Rosemary and Shiitake

#### Ingredients

2 tablespoons	bacon drippings
1 1/2 pounds	venison, cut into 2 inch cubes
2 cups	fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, sliced
2 medium	onions, chopped
4 cloves	garlic, minced
2 tablespoons	cognac or brandy
2 cups	dry red wine
1 cube	beef bouillon
1/4 teaspoon	black pepper
1/2 teaspoon	dried thyme leaves
1 teaspoons	dried rosemary
2	bay leaves
1	(8 ounce) package baby carrots
1 tablespoon	cornstarch
2 tablespoons	water



#### Directions

Melt the bacon drippings in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Sear the venison in two batches until nicely browned and remove. Stir in the shiitake, onions, and garlic; cook until softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Pour in the cognac, wine, and bouillon cube, simmer for 30 seconds to remove the alcohol flavor and dissolve the bouillon.

Stir in the venison, pepper, thyme, rosemary, and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer gently until the venison is tender, about two hours or more; adding water as needed.

If using baby carrots, add them during the last half hour of cooking. When the venison is tender, you may wish to thicken the sauce by dissolving the cornstarch in 2 tablespoons of water and stirring it into the sauce.

## VISITING Varietals



### CABERNET SAUVIGNON

#### Pronunciation:

Cab-er-nay-sawvee-nyon

In the seventeenth century in southwestern France, an accidental breeding occurred between a red Cabernet Franc grape plant and a white Sauvignon Blanc grape plant and thus was born the most popular grape among American wine drinkers: Cabernet Sauvignon.

Cabernet Sauvignon is a red grape varietal known for its thick, durable skin, and the vine's resistance to the elements. After the birth of the grape, the Cabernet Sauvignon varietal began to be adopted in parts of France by winemakers searching for more durable plants that were relatively easy to grow, and the grape found its champion in the region of Bordeaux.

Apart from its success in Bordeaux, Cabernet Sauvignon saw its reputation take off even further when it was planted in California. In 1976, a Cabernet Sauvignon from Stags' Leap in the Napa Valley beat out the top Bordeaux Chateaus in the 1976 Judgement of Paris in a blind taste test. From that moment on, California Cabernet Sauvignon was launched into the world and began to be ordered at steakhouses around the globe.

As a wine, Cabernet Sauvignon is known for its dark color, full body and an alcohol content that is over 13.5%, with most Cabernet Sauvignons, especially those from places such as California, Australia and Chile, being more like 14.5% and sometimes even going over 15%. The wine is dry (not sweet) and has a healthy level of tannin, which is why your mouth dries out when you sip it. Many people who drink Cabernet Sauvignon say they always pick up a taste of green pepper in the wine, along with tobacco, cassis, and dark fruits such as cherries, along with a hint of vanilla that comes from the wine aging in the oak.

CHEESE

Varietals



## MASCARPONE

**Pronunciation:** mahs-kahr-POH-neh  
Mascarpone is an Italian cheese from the Lombardy region, made by curdling milk cream with citric acid or acetic acid. It is a thick, double or triple cream, soft cheese with a very high fat content ranging from 60% to 75%. The resulting rich butterfat content makes the cheese an essential ingredient in Italian recipes like Tiramisu and cheesecakes.

The texture of Mascarpone ranges from smooth, creamy to buttery, depending on how it is processed during cheesemaking. The concise portrayal of Mascarpone really is just thickened cream that is on its way to becoming butter. Making the cheese is so simple that many people easily make their own Mascarpone at home.

Mascarpone is used in both sweet and savory dishes. It is added to enhance the flavour of the dish without overwhelming the original taste. The cheese tastes best with anchovies, mustard and spices, or mixed with cocoa or coffee. Tiramisu, a layered dish with espresso, brandy, chocolate and Mascarpone has brought the cheese to the forefront of Italian cooking. Another possible use of Mascarpone is to thicken puddings and dessert creams. It is also popular as a standalone dessert served with fruit or syrup.






Whether you buy Mascarpone or make it at home, it needs to be consumed within a few days or it can go bad.

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