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Educators Immersion Tour

January 2025

Presented by California Wines





The History and Evolution of Zinfandel across California



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Some red grapes *really* tell the story of a ‘greater’ region

Pinot Noir in France

Tempranillo in Spain

Nebbiolo in Piedmont

Malbec in Argentina

Syrah in the Rhône and Australia

Touriga Nacional in Portugal

And.... Zinfandel in California...



Source: Turley Cellars

Origins of Zinfandel

Long shrouded in mystery...

Where does it really come from?

- A. California
- B. Persia/Iran
- C. Hungary
- D. Southern Italy
- E. Croatia



And The Answer Is...**E. Croatia**

- In December 2004, Carole Meredith proved via extensive DNA analysis that Zinfandel's origins can be traced to the Crljenak kaštelanski (pronounced: gree-YELL-nack Ka-stell-AHN-skee) (more momentarily..)
- Crljenak Kaštelanski = Tribidrag (or Pribidrag) still in Croatia= Primitivo in Italy = Kratošija in Montenegro.
 - Interestingly, Primitivo and Tribidrag are words derived from words meaning "early"- in Latin and Croatian respectively- referring to the variety's characteristic of ripening early.
- Zin is NOT Plavac Mali, the offspring of a crossing of *Zinfandel* and another local variety called Dobricic. It is once-removed from Tribidrag!

A Granular Timeline

Hundreds of Years Back: Croatia & Southern Italy had long 'exchanged' vines; it was suggested, in Italy, that there was a grape- Plavac Mali- that could be 'that grape'-

Early 1820's: Zinfandel arrives in Long Island, NY

1832: Boston vineyard offers *Zinfendal* for sale

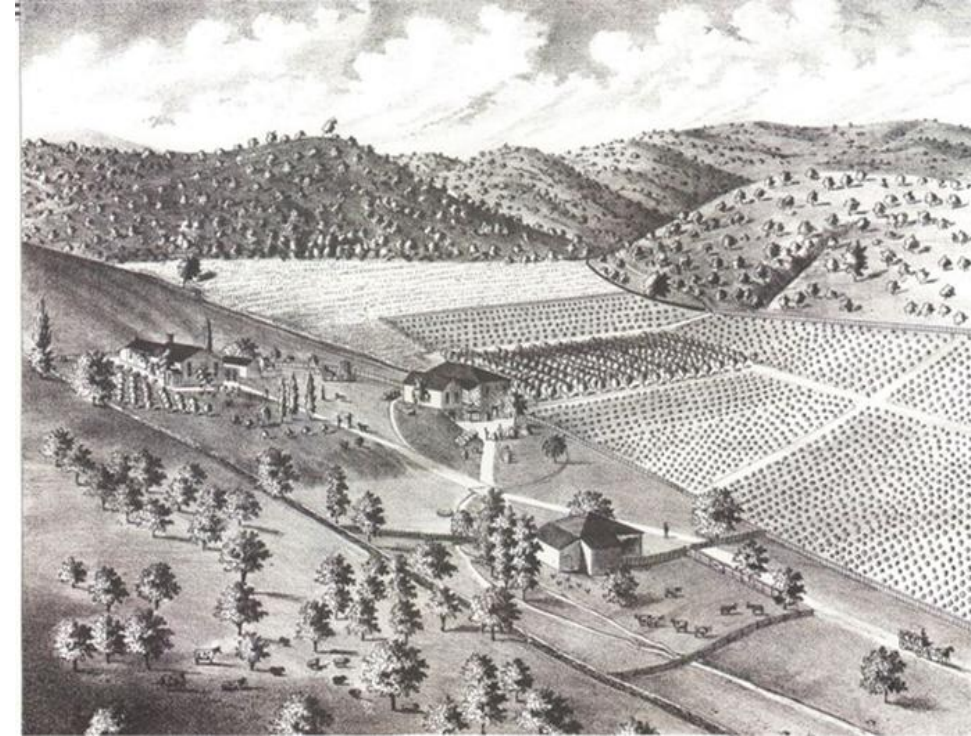
1850's: Arrival of Zinfandel in California

Frederick Macondray, a nursery owner from MA

And by **1859:** Arrival of Zinfandel to Napa and Sonoma

1860's & 70's:

Zinfendal becomes Zinfandel, survives phylloxera and Prohibition



Source: Zinfandel.org

A Granular Timeline

1900s- 1970's: Zin reinforces her CA signature, but as other red grapes come into the fold, she loses favor and sales slow.

1972: White Zin is born and saves many old vines

1960's-2001: The debate over origins (Primitivo vs. Zin vs. Plavac Mali)



Source: The Alcohol Professor

Context is everything.....



Bearing Winegrape Acreage in California in 1971: Top 60 Varietals
in acres; Source: California Grape Acreage 1971

1 Carignane	25,795	21 Semillon	1,160	41 Malvasia Bianca	244
2 Zinfandel	19,470	22 Sauvignon Blanc	1,071	42 Green Hungarian	238
3 Grenache	12,428	23 White Riesling	1,068	43 St Macaire	231
4 French Colombard	7,835	24 Sylvaner	1,048	44 Grignolino	229
5 Mission	6,440	25 Sauvignon Vert	856	45 Almission	217
6 Alicante Bouchet	6,418	26 Black Malvoisie	810	46 St Emilion	191
7 Palomino	6,371	27 Gamay Beaujolais	742	47 Folle Blanche	183
8 Cabernet Sauvignon	3,898	28 Early Burgundy	711	48 Cabernet Franc	149
9 Petite Sirah	3,839	29 Gray Riesling	683	49 Flora	145
10 Chenin Blanc	2,903	30 Emerald Riesling	645	50 Merlot	121
11 Pinot Noir	2,420	31 Pinot Blanc	542	51 Pinot St George	101
12 Ruby Cabernet	2,218	32 Feher Szagos	516	52 Sangiovetto/-vese	99
13 Rubired	2,135	33 Pedro Ximines	501	53 Nebbiolo	76
14 Royalty	2,084	34 Gewurztraminer	474	54 Aramon	75
15 Burger	2,060	35 Tinta Madeira	447	55 Muscat Hamburg	71
16 Mataro	1,855	36 Refosco	394	56 Beclan	54
17 Valdepenas	1,849	37 Muscat Blanc	352	57 Cataratto	52
18 Salvador	1,641	38 Perelli 101	322	58 Chasselas Doré	52
19 Chardonnay	1,630	39 Aleatico	295	59 Red Veltliner	51
20 Gamay	1,188	40 Grand Noir	283	60 Souzao	47

No, Cabernet Sauvignon was not always king....

Timeline: Thank You Carole Meredith!

1990's Post the Primitivo connection, Carole Meredith went to Croatia

- Studied over 150 different grapes back at UC Davis
- While it was demonstrated that there was a relationship between Zin and Plavac Mali...Zinfandel was a parent of the Plavac Mali grape when conjoined with Dobricic
BUT..still no conclusive evidence

December 2001 Dr. Pejic from the University of Zagreb discovers a grape in Kaštel Novi (near Split) that he feels is definitely Zin: Crljenak

In 2002, additional vines known locally as Pribidrag, which bore the same DNA as Crljenak Kaštelanski and Zinfandel, were found in another Dalmatian coastal town called Omiš.

December 2004- Indeed, it's proven...

But did it come to Croatia from Greece? Albania?...nobody knows..but it's been in Croatia for a long time



Source: GuildSomm

Why Zinfandel?

- Appealing varietal character/flavors
 - Easy to like/enjoy
- Price to quality ratio often surpasses many/most other red varietals
- Earlier drinkability than other red grapes
 - When compared to Cabernet Sauvignon..
- Versatility of styles = flexibility at table
 - Novello vs. claret vs. monster truck
- And its ability to express provenance!



Source: jancisrobinson.com

Our esteemed panelists.....

Tegan Passalacqua (Turley Wine Cellars & Sandlands)

Shauna Rosenblum (Ridge Vineyards)

Morgan Twain-Peterson MW (Bedrock)



Countries & Appellations of Origin

- California
 - Napa (Calistoga, “North end”), Sonoma (Alexander Valley, Dry Creek, Rockpile, Russian River, Sonoma Valley), Central Coast (SLO, Paso Robles), Mendocino (Ukiah, Mendocino Ridge), Lake County, Santa Cruz Mtns, Sierra Foothills (Amador, Yolo), Contra Costa, Lodi (Mokelumne River, Clement Hills), Southern California (Temecula, San Bernardino (Cucamonga)), LA County, San Diego
 - Rest of USA: Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, etc.
- Italy: Apulia (Primitivo di Manduria)
- Australia, Hungary, Croatia, South Africa, Iran, Chile, Brazil, NZ, Mexico, France

And with that... onto

SOME ZINFORMATION!!!!!!

Zinfandel Today

- **Styles/Quandaries/Choices**
- Flavor Lexicon
- Terminology



A Zinfandel Vineyard in Rockpile.
Source:
www.winecountrygetaways.com

Subplots of Discussion

- Vine age and clone/selection
- Mixed Blacks vs. Mono varietal
- Head/gobelet vs. other trellising
- Ripeness levels and when to pick
- Native vs. inoculated ferments
- Vinification “style” (white vs. nouveau vs. claret vs. monster truck)
- To wood vs. not to wood
 - Age of wood; size and type of wood
 - OR...Amphoras, concrete, etc..
- Fining and Filtration... or not



Majestic, own rooted “old man” Lodi Zinfandel (planted in 1901) in Mohr-Fry Ranches’ Marian’s Vineyard (Lodiwine.com)

Flavor Lexicon

- FRUIT: Blackberry, raspberry, cherries, plum, strawberry, blueberry, cranberry, fig, prune, raisin, pomegranate molasses,
- VEGETABLE AND HERBAL: Olives, bell peppers, anise/licorice, eucalyptus, green peppercorn, tobacco, rhubarb, leaves, eucalyptus, oregano, laurel, mint, thyme, sage, rosemary, pine, green or black tea, sarsaparilla, pipe tobacco or cigar box, violets, coriander, fennel seed
- EARTH: Dusty earth, mineral, terracotta, potting soil, compost
- OAK/SPICE: Vanilla, clove, nutmeg, chocolate, smoke, coffee bean, mocha, cinnamon, toast, coconut, brown/burnt sugar, molasses, roasted/toasted nut
- OTHER: Jam, summer pudding, fruitcake, port, soy, peppercorn, meat/charcuterie



ZAP Zinfandel Aroma wheel

Wine 1: Sandlands Lodi Zinfandel

Vintage: 2022 | **ABV:** 14.3%

Provenance: Mokelumne River AVA (Lodi)

Assemblage: 100% Zinfandel (mostly...)

Vine Age: Vineyard planted in 1915

Elevage: 100% aged in used (neutral) French oak barrels

This wine comes from the Kirschenmann vineyard on the east side of Lodi's Mokelumne River AVA, planted almost exclusively to Zinfandel in 1915 on silica-rich sandy soils



Wine 2: Lange Twins Centennial

Vintage: 2018 | **ABV:** 15%

Provenance: Mokelumne River AVA (Lodi)

Assemblage: 100% Zinfandel

Vine Age: Lewis Ranch planted in 1903

Elevage: 24 months in American Oak

Randy and Bradford Lange's great-grandparents set down agriculture roots in Lodi in the 1870s and began a family farm growing non-irrigated watermelons. In 1916, they purchased their first vineyard.

After returning from college, the twins purchased a small vineyard from their dad and began their farming partnership.



Wine 3: Bedrock Evangelho Zinfandel

Vintage: 2023 | **ABV:** 14.5%

Provenance: Contra Costa AVA (alongside the Sacramento River Delta)

Assemblage: Zinfandel, Mataro, Carignan, Alicante, and Palomino

Vine Age: Vineyard planted in 1890's

Elevage: Aged in predominately 300- and 500-liter puncheons

A combination of Block 2 and Block 3, each of which contain a smattering of Carignan, Mourvedre, Palomino, Alicante, and even a single Clairette vine



Wine 4: Seghesio Cortina Zinfandel

Vintage: 2021 | **ABV:** 15.0%

Provenance: Dry Creek Valley AVA (Sonoma County)

Assemblage: 100% Zinfandel

Vine Age: Planted in 1972 on sandy soils

Elevage: 10 months in small French oak

The Italian immigrant Seghesio family arrived in Sonoma County in 1895- Five generations and 125 vintages later, they are still going strong!

Named for the gravelly loam soils where this variety thrives, Cortina comes predominantly from Chen's vineyard which was planted by the Seghesio family in 1972 (they had bought it in 1957)



Wine 5: Ridge Pagani Ranch Zinfandel

Vintage: 2022 | **ABV:** 14.4%

Provenance: Sonoma Valley AVA (Sonoma County)

Assemblage: 82% Zinfandel, 9% Alicante Bouschet, 5% Petite Sirah, 4% Mataro

Vine Age: Planted 120'ish years ago (some replanting 2013-2018)

Elevage: 14 months in 100% air dried American oak, 15% new

Ridge has made this wine since 1991

Fourth generation family owned and managed vineyard by the Pagani family



Wine 6: Mauritson Jack's Cabin Zinfandel

Vintage: 2022 | **ABV:** 14.75%

Provenance: Rockpile AVA (Sonoma County)

Assemblage: 95% Zinfandel, 5% Petite Sirah

Vine Age: Homestead vvd planted in 1884; actual age of Jack's N/A

Elevage: 14 months in oak barrels 100% French

Named after one of the area's earliest settlers, the Jack's Cabin site has quite a colorful history: Though Jack Ireland's primary occupation was clearing land for sheep and cattle grazing, he was most known for his moonshine and disregard for the law.



Wine 7: Robert Biale Aldo's Vineyards Zinfandel

Vintage: 2022 | **ABV:** 14.7%

Provenance: Oak Knoll AVA (Napa Valley)

Assemblage: (labeled) 100% Zinfandel

Vine Age: Planted in 1937, head trained, dry farmed

Elevage: 15 months in small French oak, 29% new

Aldo's mother Nonna Cristina, way back when, negotiated a good old-fashioned land swap that secured the vineyard in exchange for her prune orchard.

These are the oldest vines in Oak Knoll and are close by where Captain Osborne first planted hisn Zinfandel in Napa Valley in 1860



Wine 8: Tres Sabores Rutherford Estate Zinfandel

Vintage: 2022 | **ABV:** 14.3%

Provenance: Rutherford AVA (Napa Valley)

Assemblage: 100% Zinfandel

Vine Age: Planted in 1972; dry farmed, no till

Elevage: 30% new French oak for 22 months

The vineyards, ranch, and winery of Tres Sabores are nestled against the western Hills off South Whitehall Lane, where the winemaker and owner, Julie Johnson, and her family live and grow organically-certified Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot



Wine 9: Turley DuPratt Zinfandel

Vintage: 2021 | **ABV:** 14.0%

Provenance: Mendocino Ridge AVA (Mendocino County)

Assemblage: 100% Zinfandel

Vine Age: Planted in 1919, Own-rooted, head-trained, dry-farmed

Elevage: 15 months in oak, 20% new; 80% being French oak, 20% American

At 457 meters altitude, this vineyard is surrounded by giant Redwood trees, forming a little island in the sky. The site is so remote that the vines still survive on their own original roots as Phylloxera has never made its way up there.



Wine 10: Jeff Cohn Cellars Rinaldi Vineyard Zinfandel

Vintage: 2020 | **ABV:** 14.5%

Provenance: Fiddletown AVA (Amador County)

Assemblage: 100% Zinfandel

Vine Age: Planted in 1865 (replanting since 1950's)

Elevage: 10 months in small French oak

Rinaldi Vineyard sits at 607 meters elevation in the Sierra Foothills of Amador County. Jeff's rows are a tad lower, at 488 – 549 meters on decomposed volcanic rock and red soils.

Today, there may be half a hectare of the ancient vines still producing fruit. The remaining vines in the original 15 hectares block are more than 100 years old. Gino Rinaldi bought Eschen vineyards in 2001.



Wine 11: Peachy Canyon Old Schoolhouse Zinfandel

Vintage: 2021 | **ABV:** 14.5%

Provenance: Templeton Gap AVA (Paso Robles)

Assemblage: 100% Zinfandel (18 Heritage Clones/Selections)

Vine Age: Planted in 1980 (replanting started in 2015)

Elevage: 10 months in small French oak

Old Schoolhouse is dry farmed and lies within the Templeton Gap, a sub-AVA which has ample coastal influence impacting the growing season: lower degree days + more fog = longer hang time on the vine.

Peachy Canyon Winery's Doug and Nancy Beckett, both retired schoolteachers, purchased the vineyard from Kendall-Jackson in 1996.

The winery is managed by their sons, Jake and Josh.



Additional Resources

Old Vine Registry: <https://www.oldvineregistry.org/>

Historic Vineyard Society: <https://historicvineyardsociety.org/>

ZAP (Zinfandel Advocates and Producers): <https://zinfandel.org/>

Capstone California: <https://capstonecalifornia.com/> 😊



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