

Dry Creek Surges Ahead

BY STEVE HEIMOFF

ALWAYS KNOWN FOR ITS ZINFANDELS, THIS SONOMA VALLEY WINE REGION IS WORTH A VISIT FOR FRIENDLY TASTING ROOMS POURING RHÔNE VARIETIES AND THE QUIRKY CHARM OF HEALDSBURG.

The Sauvignon Blanc story

Dry Creek was declared Sonoma's second American Viticultural Area in 1983 (the first was Sonoma Valley, a year earlier). Zinfandel's success was crucial to making that happen, but the rapid rise of Sauvignon Blanc also contributed.

In 1972, Dave Stare started Dry Creek Vineyard, the first new winery in the valley since Prohibition, and one of the varieties he planted was the grape he'd fallen in love with while traveling in France's Loire Valley. "The county farm advisor told me that nobody could grow Sauvignon Blanc here," Stare recalls, with a rueful grin. "He recommended Chardonnay, Riesling or Gewürztraminer. I ignored his advice and planted Sauvignon Blanc." It was a perfect fit: Sauvignon Blanc thrived in the vigorous bottomland soils Zinfandel didn't like.

Dry Creek Sauvignon Blancs are made in various styles, from grassy and unoaked to creamy, barrel-fermented bottlings like Dry Creek Vineyard's DCV3 (which they call Fumé Blanc).

■ *"... don't forget to turn onto Lambert Bridge Road to Dry Creek Vineyard - in many ways the valley's Mother ship."*

Cab's uphill struggle

The earliest Dry Creek Cabernets generally exhibited a dusty, herbal character that was not as rich as a Napa Cab. But better viticultural techniques in recent years, as well as improved clones and warmer harvests, have tended to make the Cabs fruitier. Dry Creek Vineyard's general manager, Don Wallace, finds "big cherries and chocolate flavors, with hints of coffee," in his Endeavor Cabernet, grown from an eastside vineyard.

Dry Creek Vineyard 2003 DCV3 Fumé Blanc (Dry Creek Valley); \$25

Ripe and creamy, with fleshy peach and melon aromas brought to attention by notes of jalapeño and grass. Like the notes, the palate deals mostly ripe melon and peach flavors with touches of grass, white pepper and greens. Bulky and full.



Dry Creek
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