

JACKASS HILL ZINFANDEL

In 1895 Giuseppe Martinelli and Luisa Vellutini eloped from their homeland in the marbled hills Northern Italy. The lush Green Valley and Russian River Valley region reminded them of their Italian homeland. With Giuseppe's experience in viticulture from his homeland, he soon procured a job grafting Zinfandel grapevines for a farmer in Green Valley. Every Sunday, on his only day off, Giuseppe walked through the hills along Green Valley Creek, searching for the perfect site to plant a Zinfandel vineyard. He had brought with him from Europe the consummate method of growing grapes; planting a specific grape varietal on a site which is ideal for that particular varietal to flourish.

After the untimely death of Giuseppe, his thirteen-year-old son, Leno, was given sole responsibility of farming the 60-degree slope. Leno grew up receiving all of his farming and winemaking knowledge from his parents and from his own lifelong experience. This rugged section of the ranch is referred to by the Martinelli family as "Jackass Hill", because only a jackass would farm a hill that steep. Jackass Hill is the steepest non-terraced hillside vineyard in Sonoma County. At age 89 Leno turned over the caretaking of the steep hillside vineyard to his son, my father, Lee Sr. Lee is the third generation of Martinellis to caretake the original family homestead land; farming the ancient vineyard much as his grandfather Giuseppe had one-hundred years before, without irrigation, pesticides, or trellising.

Once picked, the grape bunches are de-stemmed and the whole berries undergo a long cool fermentation to generate skin contact and enhance fruit character. The juice is fermented with indigenous yeast. The wine is then gravity fed into small oak barrels with a touch of residual sugar remaining to complete the fermentation process in barrel until dry. The grapes are 100% barrel fermented with wild yeast, resting in 75% new French oak on its gross lees for 10 months.

Winemaker: Helen Turley

Asst. Winemaker: Bryan Kvamme

Jackass Hill Zinfandel in the Press

1993 Vintage ~ **94 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr. ~ 91 pts. Stephen Tanzer ~ Wine Spectator 94 pts.**

1994 Vintage ~ **97-98 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr.**

1995 Vintage ~ **97-99pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr.**

1996 Vintage ~ **94-96 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr. ~ 95 pts. Stephen Tanzer**

1997 Vintage ~ **95 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr.**

1998 Vintage ~ **96 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr.**

1999 Vintage ~ **96 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr.**

2000 Vintage ~ **94 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr.**

2001 Vintage ~ **93 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr. ~ 93 pts. Stephen Tanzer ~ 90 pts. Wine Spectator**

2002 Vintage ~ 96 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr. ~ 91 pts. Wine Spectator ~ 92 pts. Stephen Tanzer

... "Its spectacular smorgasboard of aromas includes lavender, freshly ground pepper, smoke, over-ripe figs, currants, molasses, and saffron. Rich and dense, with multiple layers, this is a Zinfandel that must be tasted to be believed. As the wine sits in the glass, notions of mincemeat, roasted meats, and other heavenly goodies emerge. I would opt for drinking it during its first decade of life, but these wine can last much longer. I prefer them in their exuberant, almost uncontrolled youthfulness. My last aromatic note on this wine stated that I thought I had been reborn and returned to earth in a hippy den in the late 1960's." ~ Robert M. Parker, Jr.

"A superrich, ultraripe and remarkably complex wine that's dense and concentrated, with tiers of sage, blackberry, wild berry and raspberry fruit, all well-balanced. Toasty oak adds a nice flavor dimension and gives a fleshy feel...

Drink now through 2010." James Laube

2003 Vintage ~ 96 pts. Robert M. Parker, Jr. ~ 93+ pts. Stephen Tanzer

... "The 2003 Zinfandel Jackass Hill Vineyard ... is, of course, pure exoticism. This full-bodied, luscious Zinfandel exudes notes of Provencal herbs, freshly ground pepper, espresso roast, overripe figs, sassafras, coffee, jammy strawberry and blackberry fruits backed up by an unctuous texture, and a totally dry, huge, monster finish with oodles of fruit and glycerin. It is an amazing wine and a provocative example of the heights Zinfandel can reach but so rarely does.."

~ Robert M. Parker, Jr.