

FIDDLETOWN WINE GRAPE GROWERS
P. O. Box 64
Fiddletown, California 95629

July 30, 1982

Director
(Regulatory Enforcement)
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
Washington, D.C. 20226

Gentlemen:

The Fiddletown Wine Grape Growers, by this letter, respectfully submit our application to be a recognized viticultural area to be known as Fiddletown.

We believe that granting this application is important to maintain the identity and reputation of the production of the high quality grapes and wine unique to the Fiddletown area.

Fiddletown Wine Grape Growers
Chester Eschen, President
John A. Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer

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I

EVIDENCE THAT THE AREA IS KNOWN
BY THE PROPOSED NAME

Enclosed please find historical evidence to validate our claim supporting this application.

Today Amador County consists of numerous small towns which normally have one general store, a schoolhouse, and a cemetery. The names of various towns send you back to another era: Jackson, Volcano, Sutter Creek, and Chili Gulch. The present-day town of Plymouth was once called "Pokerville", and nearby Ione which began as a trading post used to be called "Bedbug" and was later changed to "Freezout." Fiddletown, which got its name, because the young men of the town were always "fiddling" around, was briefly changed to the name of Oleta. But Fiddletown was immortalized in a story by Bret Harte, and the original name was restored in 1920.

The additional material attached serves as further evidence of the historical validity of the name "Fiddletown". (Exhibits 2, 5, 5, 9, 10 and 11).

II

HISTORICAL OR CURRENT EVIDENCE THAT THE PROPOSED
BOUNDARIES OF THE VITICULTURAL AREA ARE CORRECT

The proposed boundaries not only include the established vineyards, some over 50 years old, but also land of similar elevation, soil and climatic conditions that may be developed into vineyards of the same high quality.

Enclosed are:

1. Bob Plaister Report
"Wine Grapes in Amador County"
2. Vintage Magazine
"Amador County Zinfandel"

3. "Zinfandels of the Eschen and Esola Vineyards"
by Thomas Hill

4. "Wine with Narsai David"

Feb. 9, 1977, San Francisco Examiner

Also See Exhibit 1.

III

EVIDENCE THAT THE GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF THE AREA PRODUCE GROWING CONDITIONS WHICH DISTINGUISH THE PROPOSED AREA FROM SURROUNDING AREAS

The gently rolling foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the Fiddletown region, with its red, decomposed granite soil, make up a most unique grape growing region. The area is specifically classified as a Middle Region III by the University of California - Davis degree-day classification scheme. (See Exhibits 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10)

The Fiddletown area is unique. The grapes are grown from the 1500-foot level in the Sierra Foothills to as high as the frosts will allow (about 2500 feet). The summer daytime temperatures range from the eighties to one hundred degrees, but the nights always cool off with a breeze that comes down from the mountains. The grapes are grown on the southern and western slopes of the hills where there is good deep soil, basically a loam of decomposed granite. All the grapes are grown without any irrigation and the crops range from 1-1/2 to 3 tons per acre. The vines are pruned closely and fertilized very lightly. In dry years no fertilizer is applied.

Because of the warm, dry climate, very little sulphur dust is applied for mildew, often only once, so sulfur residue is not a problem. All the grapes are hand-picked and top quality is maintained. The grapes have a distinct high quality with both heavy sugar and high acidity which makes fine wines that age well and achieve their highest quality after years in the bottle. Commonly, grapes are produced with incredible quality figures, such as sugars to 24.0 brix and upward, while maintaining a total acidity of .80 gm/100 ml.

Grapes were first planted in this area by French, Italian and Slavic miners during the gold rush and some of them are still producing. Throughout the years, a great deal of home wine has been made by descendants of these people with the knowledge brought from the homelands. Often these wines are excellent.

Many Napa and Sonoma wineries have used grapes from Fiddletown to fortify their wines.

The soils that comprise the grape growing areas of the Fiddletown region are Sierra-Ahwahee series and Sites series. These soils are deep, moderately well drained and consist of loams and sandy loams.

The soils are formed mainly from granodiorite, but partly from granite and quartz diorite. The surface is commonly broken by outcrops of granite rock.

These soils have a surface layer of brown, or yellowish-red sandy loam or loams and occasionally yellowish-red to red loams.

All these soils are located on rolling slopes from 3 to 30%.

Rainfall from this area ranges from 30 to 40 inches in normal years.

This region differs from the Shenandoah Valley region principally because of its higher elevations, colder nights, higher levels of rainfall, and slopes which result in unique microclimate that contribute to somewhat different grapes and wines. Grapes usually will not reach the extremely high degree of brix as in the Shenandoah Valley and are thus better balanced in sugar and acid. Total acidity remains higher due to slower maturity because of elevation and cool evenings.

Wines from the Fiddletown area usually are well-balanced in tartaric acid levels, tannic acid and fruitness and are considered to be longer-lived than the Shenandoah Valley wines.

IV

A NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARIES
BASED ON FEATURES WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON A UNITED STATES
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAP(S) OF THE LARGEST APPLICABLE SCALE

The proposed boundaries are drawn as closely as possible, enclosing the present Fiddletown viticultural region, using normal boundaries, such as creeks and township lines readily identifiable on the enclosed United States Geological Survey map.

The Fiddletown viticultural area lies southeast of the Shenandoah viticultural area.

Beginning at the north boundary where Fiddletown Shenandoah Road crosses Big Indian Creek, approximately between Section 27 and 28, Township 8N, Range 11E.

Proceeds in a southwesterly direction following Big Indian Creek through the southeast corner of Section 29, crosses northwest corner of Section 32 to where it meets Sections 31 and 32. This border is contiguous with Shenandoah Valley.

Continuing in a southerly direction following Section lines between Section 5 and 6, 7 and 8 of Township 7N, Range 11E to where the Section line meets the South Bank of Dry Creek. Then following South Bank of Dry Creek in an easterly direction crossing the lower portions of Sections 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and into Township 8N, Range 12 E at Section 7 and 8.

Then north between Sections 7 and 8, 5 and 6 into Range 12E between Sections 31 and 32, meeting Big Indian Creek, following Big Indian Creek in a westerly direction through Sections 30, 25, 26 and 27 until the starting point.

V

A COPY OF THE APPROPRIATE U.S.G.S. MAP(S)
WITH THE BOUNDARIES MARKED IN ANY PROMINENT COLOR

The maps as requested are attached. The large taped map shows the entire area and the additional four maps are the originals.

EXHIBIT I

FIDDLETOWN WINE GRAPE GROWERS
P. O. Box 64
Fiddletown, California 95629

MEMBERS:

Chester Eschen
Charles Bakkman
Gladys Esola Estate
John Lewis
Scott Harvey
Chris Lubenko
Martin Lubenko
Richard Martella
Joseph Peri
Richard Krayenhagen
Michael D. Hoey
Jim Larsen
Ray Zanini, Jr.

President: Chester Eschen
Secretary-Treasurer: John Lewis

EXHIBIT II

GROWERS FROM THE FIDDLETOWN AREA HAVE
SOLD GRAPES TO THE FOLLOWING WINERIES:

Amador Foothill Winery
Carneros Creek
David Bruce
Eastside
Mayacamas
Harbor
Karly
Ridge Vineyards
Robert Mondavi
Sutter Home
Shenandoah Vineyards
Santino

EXHIBIT III

FACT SHEET

CALIFORNIA'S FIDDLETOWN VITICULTURE REGION

1. Located 45 miles East of Sacramento.
2. Settled and named in early 1850's.
3. Agricultural community, family farms.
4. Currently have 14 commercial wine grape growers.
5. Proposed viticultural area about 11,500 acres.
6. Continuous wine grape production since the 1920's.
7. Current vinifera wine grape acreage about 310.
8. Wineries ^{adjacent to} ~~in~~ proposed viticultural area: 10 (family owned)
9. Over 12 California wineries have used this area's grapes.
10. Recognized nationally for its wines since the early 1970's.

EXHIBIT IV

VARIETIES OF GRAPES GROWN IN AREA

Mission
Black Muscat
Muscat Cannelli
Muscat of Alexandria
Sauvignon Blanc
Zinfandel

"WINE GRAPES IN AMADOR COUNTY"

by

Robert E. Plaister
County Director and
Farm Advisor

June 1967

THE HISTORY OF GRAPE GROWING IN AMADOR COUNTY

Almost as soon as the miners came to the Sierra Foothills in Amador County, grape growing became a way of life. The economics of grape growing had several violent fluctuations over the years. In spite of this, the industry has persisted and today is one of the most profitable crops that can be grown between the one thousand and the two thousand foot elevation. One of the earliest recorded statements on grape growing is mentioned in Sargeant's History of Amador County: "The Davis Ranch in Shenandoah Valley was settled upon in '59 by John J. Davis. He has made a specialty of pears, grapes, almonds and apricots." This ranch still has a beautiful vineyard on it and many of the original vines are still producing. By 1860 there were nearly 300,000 grape vines (500 acres) in Amador County. This is nearly equal to the current acreage of grapes.

In 1860 Woolsey and Palmer planted a large vineyard at Lancha Plana. This was later dug up when a depression hit the wine business.

In 1863 James Laughton quit the mining business and bought a farm on which he planted a fine vineyard. During 1861 to 1864 a severe depression hit the wine industry. Attempts to market the wine in the east resulted in a loss so that many persons were induced to tear up their vineyards and give up the business. At this time there were vineyards along the Mokulumne River around Jackson, Ione, and the Jackson-Ione Valleys as well as higher up along the head waters of these creeks.

In the 1880's a group of Frenchmen notably Douet, Madam Pantaloons, and Xavier Benoist planted vineyards above the Vela Ranch east and south of Jackson, in what is now the Clinton Area.

Along about this time Anthony Caminetti first engaged in grape growing at what was called French Gardens.

In 1881 J. D. Mason in his history of Amador County mentions choice grapes being grown in the Shenandoah Valley. He mentioned the Ball Ranch as being planted to grapes. Mason describes the Uhlinger Ranch (D'Agostini Winery) as having perhaps twenty thousand vines of different varieties flourishing finely. "The wine is said to be of fine quality."

"In the Drytown area wine of a fine quality is manufactured in considerable quantities, the capacity of the soil for grapes being unsurpassed."

In the description of the grape growing areas, Mason indicated that grapes are in perfection at Jackson, grapes in Volcano owing to the situation of the town and basin are liable to frost, and that grape growing at Pine Grove required sheltered situations but produced good grapes. Dentzler's flume house at 2980 feet grew grapes which were uncertain and lacked sugar.

On July 25, 1889 the U. S. Agricultural Experiment Station situated on the Creek Road opposite the Molfino Ranch east of Jackson was turned over to the Board of Regents of the University of California for experiments in agriculture, horticulture and viticulture. At a dinner on the important day honoring Professor W. E. Hilgard, wines were served at dinner including claret, riesling, and angelica. This station is no longer owned by the University, however, some of the trees and vines are still in existence and are occasionally used to collect virus free stock for University experiments.

In a newspaper article in 1889, the adaptability of this section to the production of the best quality of grapes is described. "Wine of body and bouquet and a

fine quality and flavor of brandy were indicated to have been universally commended."

Grapes were grown at the Preston School of Industry near Ione in the 1890's. These were replanted in the 1920's.

In the late 1890's many Frenchmen became discouraged with mining and planted vineyards in the Middle Bar area along the Mokelumne River. These vineyards were planted from cuttings brought from France.

In Sargeant's History of Amador County it is mentioned that Olita's (Fiddletown) future was never so bright, thousands of vines and trees having been planted the last six years. I. P. Ostrom has one of the largest vineyards. Louis Smith and Sons a vineyard, Dennis Toomey a vineyard, and also W. D. Clark and Son. During the 1920's B. L. Jones, El Dorado County Farm Advisor for the University of California, conducted demonstrations in pruning in a Shenandoah-Fiddletown area.

Although the industry has had many violent ups and downs, in the past hundred years, it has persisted in the Shenandoah-Fiddletown-Ridge Road areas. The county at one time boasted many small wineries. All of these have gone out of existence except the D'Agostini Winery in the upper Shenandoah Valley which is discussed in another section.

In 1955 the Agricultural Extension Service's office was opened in Amador County. Since that time a continuing program of research and investigation has continued in the vineyard areas. Systematic studies and the close cooperation of the growers has resulted in the determination of proper nitrogen levels, fertilization, the discovery of boron deficiency, the identification and control of the spider mite, and the establishment of a varietal test plot.

Zinfandels of The Eschen and Esola Vineyards

by Thomas R. Hill

Most California wine enthusiasts are well acquainted with the "discovery" of Amador County Zinfandel by Sacramento merchant Darrell Corti after tasting one of home winemaker Charlie Myers' wines. The big Deaver Zinfandel produced by Sutter Home in 1968 defined the genre of Amador-style Zinfandels which have since followed that success.

Less familiar are some of the outstanding Zinfandels lately produced from the Amador vineyards of Chester Eschen and Ernest Esola by Carneros Creek, Mount Veeder, and Ridge wineries. This article examines in depth the background of these wines and attempts to characterize some of their stylistic features.

THE GRAPES

The gently rolling foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains in Amador County with its red decomposed granite soil make up one of the most unique grape growing regions in California, if not the world. The area is officially classified as a warm Region III-cool Region IV by the UC Davis degree-days classification scheme, roughly equivalent to Lodi in the Central Valley. But this classification is deceptive.

Cool Spring weather significantly delays bud break in Amador County compared with coastal growing areas. The temperatures during the final ripening phase can often be quite high, resulting in a rise in sugar level of several degrees Brix in one day. This abbreviated, intense growing season is regarded elsewhere as inimical to production of fine wines, producing high sugar-low acid grapes.

Such is not the case in Amador. Cold air flows down from the Sierra Nevadas nightly, keeping the average temperature sufficiently low to maintain high acidity levels.

Even more important is the low humidity that charac-

terizes Amador. Bunch rot is virtually never a problem. Furthermore, once the grapes reach 25° or 26° Brix, they begin to dehydrate, but not raisin. This has much the same effect as dehydration from botrytis (without the corresponding chemical and flavor changes), concentrating the sugar, acidity, and flavors. For example, the Esola grapes in 1978 came into Carneros Creek Winery with the incredible figures of: Sugar: 31.5° Brix, Total acidity: 0.80 gm/100 ml pH: 3.28. Ernest Esola has even seen grapes in his vineyard as high as 37° Brix, yet still perfectly sound.

THE VINEYARDS

The Eschen Ranch near Fiddletown was purchased in 1972 by Chester Eschen. It totals 83 acres, with 50 acres in grapes. The majority (40 acres) is Zinfandel with the remainder being Mission (5-6 acres), Muscat, and Black Muscat.

The vineyard was planted in 1924 (during the height of Prohibition) by a man named Ostron and worked with mules for many years. About two thirds of the vines are planted on grafted rootstock, the remainder being on their own roots; phylloxera not being a problem in Amador. The vines are trained by the old Italian-style head pruning method rather than more productive cane pruning. This keeps the yield down around 2 to 2-1/2 tons/acre (dropping to less than 1 ton/acre in 1977 due to the drought). No irrigation is used.

A number of home winemakers have been purchasing Eschen grapes for many years. Until recently, most of the grapes went to East-Side Winery in Lodi for their jug blends. In 1972 and 1973, the grapes went to Robert Mondavi Winery. Since 1974, the Zinfandel grapes have gone to Carneros Creek and Ridge. The other varieties presently go to Shenandoah Vineyards.

“Just as with Napa Cabernet, Amador Zins are not all stamped from the same mold.”

About a mile to the west, as the crow flies, across a ridge of hills, lies the the Esola Vineyard in the Shenandoah Valley, near the town of Plymouth. The ranch came into the Esola family in 1910, the grapes being planted shortly thereafter. The property is presently owned by brothers John and Ernest, with Ernest and his wife, Lena d'Agostini Esola, responsible for its operation.

The Esolas have about 90 acres under vines, mostly to Zinfandel. They also have about 7 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon, 7 acres of Sauvignon Blanc, and an acre or so of Mission and Barbera.

The Zinfandel is more than 70 years old, originating from cuttings obtained locally. The Mission and Barbera are 20 years old, and the Cabernet and Sauvignon Blanc a youthful 15 years. The vines are all head pruned. The original Zin is on its own roots with the recent plantings being grafted vines on St. George rootstock. The vineyard is dry farmed, although several wells were sunk in 1977 to sustain their drought-starved vines.

The authenticity of the Sauvignon Blanc is somewhat clouded, the vines not coming from certified nursery stock. Bob Plaster, agricultural extension agent for Amador County, identifies Montevina as the only bearing acreage of that variety in the County and disclaims any knowledge of the exact variety of the white grapes on the Esola property. Nonetheless, Lena Esola states that the vines are definitely Sauvignon Blanc. At any rate, cognizant of the white wine boom, the Esolas plan to put in another 1000 such vines this year.

For years, the Esolas hauled their grapes down to Oakland for the home winemaking trade. The Barbera and Mission still go to these customers. In 1974 and 1975, they sold their Zin to Carneros Creek, Mount Veeder, and Ridge. Since 1976, they have been split between Carneros Creek and Ridge. Starting in 1974, all the Cabernet has gone to Carneros Creek. In 1978, the Sauvignon Blanc went to Caymus Vineyards for their Sauvignon Blanc wine.

III. AMADOR-STYLE ZINFANDEL.

The string of successful Zinfandels produced by Sutter Home from 1968 thru 1972 defined the style of Amador County Zinfandels: big, heavy, tannic, intensely fruity, rather alcoholic wines. These wines display, to varying degrees, a unique smell and flavor often described as Amador dusty briary, found in no other Zinfandel produced in California.

In 1972, Mayacamas Vineyards produced the first of the Late Harvest Amador Zinfandels, a huge tannic wine at 17.5 percent alcohol, but still showing the Amador flavor. Since 1973, the Sutter Home Zins have tended towards a

lighter, more drinkable style of wine and lack the power of earlier editions. Charlie Myers continues his original style of Amador Zinfandel from Deaver vineyard grapes, now under his Harbor Winery label.

The Amador-style Zin is best exemplified by those of Cary Gott's Montevina since 1974. His regular and Special Select Zins display a huge, intense, usually alcoholic style which oftentimes belies their early drinkability.

Yet even within the context of Amador-style Zinfandels, the wines all display distinct shades of differences, reflecting both the differing microclimates within Amador from which the grapes originate and also the winemaker's stylistic intent. Just as with Napa Cabernet, Amador Zins are not all stamped from the same mold.

CARNEROS CREEK WINERY

Frank Mahoney, winemaker at Carneros Creek Winery near Napa, purchased his first Zinfandel grapes in 1973 from the Eschen Ranch. Since 1974, he has purchased Zinfandel from both the Eschen and Esola vineyards.

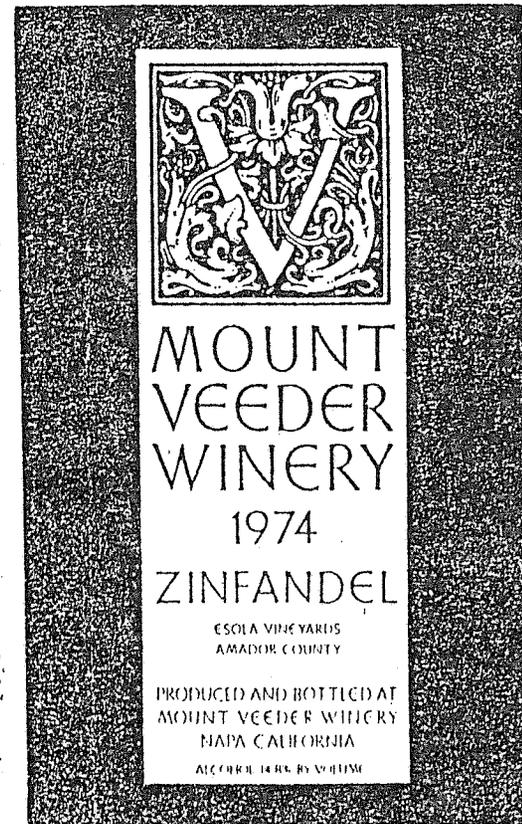
Mahoney's interest is primarily in Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon, using the Amador Zinfandels to "fill up the cracks" in his operation. The quality of his Zinfandels clearly belies his disinterest.

Mahoney does nothing particularly different with his Amador wines. They are fermented at about 85°F in stainless steel after inoculation with a pure yeast strain, on the skins for 8-11 days and pressed at about 3° sugar, and matured in American oak for slightly more than a year. Sometimes they go through the malolactic fermentation and sometimes not, the Esola being more prone to a malolactic than the Eschen.

Even when the grapes come in at nearly the same sugar/acid levels, the wines from the two vineyards are distinctly different. Mahoney finds a slightly greater richness in the Esola that's not in the Eschen. He contrasts the Esola and Eschen with the same stylistic differences of Château Palmer and Château Moutrose.

The 1973 Carneros Creek Eschen Zinfandel was probably the lightest Amador Zin Mahoney has produced, reflecting the unusually high yield of that year. The two '74 Zins illustrate near perfect growing conditions; big wines at about 14-1/2% alcohol, both harvested at nearly the same sugar/acid levels. The long cool growing season and the large crop load in 1975 produced two less ripe Zins at about 12-1/2% alcohol.

In 1976, a storm coming up from Southern California panicked the Eschen pickers to harvest early at about 21° Brix. Esola decided to wait out the storm but it stopped short of his vineyard. Unfortunately, the pickers had left the county and by the time he had regrouped them, his





Zinfandel

This Zinfandel was produced from 50 year old hillside vines grown near Fiddletown in Amador County. It has been aged in small and large American Oak since fermentation. The wine is bigger than the '73 Vintage and will continue to improve for several more years.

CARNEROS CREEK WINERY

Eschen Vineyards
Amador County

Zinfandel

Vintage 1974

Alcohol 14% by Volume
Produced and bottled by Carneros Creek Winery, Napa, California



Zinfandel was up to 27-1/2% Brix and rising rapidly.

Mahoney produced three different Amador Zins from those grapes. The first Amador County Zin was a blend of the under-ripe Eschen grapes and the least over-ripe Esola grapes, at 13.3 percent alcohol. The 1 of 11 Amador County Zin was about 20 percent Eschen and 80 percent Esola; a bigger, richer wine at 14.8 percent alcohol. And, finally, an Amador County Late Picked Zin was produced from 32° Brix Esola grapes, fermenting out to 16.7 percent alcohol.

The two 1977 Eschen and Esola Zins came in at a rea-

sonable sugar level, fermenting out to around 14 percent alcohol. But the severe drought cut the yield down below one ton/acre, producing two intensely flavored wines.

The 1978 harvest again proved to be problematic. The Eschen grapes came in at 23.8° Brix and fermented out dry. Mahoney feels this wine is more rounded and less astringent than is typical for the Eschen wines, perhaps even his best Amador Zin yet. The Esola came in at 31.5° Brix. In the fall of 1979, it was still fermenting slowly at about 4° Brix and over 15 percent alcohol. Mahoney tried a test batch of Port but was unhappy with the result; the wine

intense Amador-flavored Zins with a slight oak component, they are much like the Clos du Val Zins; big intense wines with a distinct elegance and breed. Certainly, they cannot be characterized as heavy-handed and clumsy.

Mahoney professes a dislike for the high alcohol Late Harvest style of Zinfandel and does not make them by design. He feels that as these wines age and lose their fruit, the alcohol overwhelms any complexity and simply adds to the dumbness of the wine.

RIDGE VINEYARDS

Paul Draper, winemaker at Ridge Vineyards, made their first Amador Zinfandel in 1974. The Eschen Ranch was labeled Fiddletown. The Shenandoah contained mostly grapes from the Esola vineyard with small amounts from the Storey vineyard and a third Amador vineyard.

Ridge treats their Amador Zins in much the same way as other Zinfandels. Fermentation is in stainless steel with a unique submerged cap, using the natural fermentative yeasts present on the grapes. Fermentation is initiated by the species *Kloeckera* up to about 6 percent alcohol. At this point, the fermentation is carried briefly by the species *Hansenula*, immediately followed by the traditional *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* var. *ellipsoideus* (the strain most wineries inoculate with) until fermentation is completed. This fermentation chain is identical to that found in Bordeaux where use of the natural yeasts is a much more widespread practice. Although Ridge is one of a very few California wineries using the natural fermentative yeasts (others being Congress Springs, Santa Cruz Mountain, and d'Agostini in Amador County), Draper discounts this as being a significant factor in their wines. The fermentation is on the skins for 9-12 days, essentially until dryness.

The Ridge Amador Zinfandels have thus far always gone through a malolactic fermentation. No fining or filtration is done unless absolutely necessary for bottle stability. Maturation is in American oak for about a year and a half. Clarification is done by careful racking every four months. Draper credits the malolactic and their cellar treatment as the most important factors in the making of their Amador Zins, feeling this results in a more complex and refined wine.

Draper likewise finds the Eschen and Esola grapes to give distinctly different wines. He finds more richness and fruit intensity in the Shenandoah and a harder, more tannic, more backward when young, wine in the Fiddletown.

Draper admits to having little fondness for the typical intense, alcoholic Amador-style Zinfandel, feeling the wines are clumsy and one-dimensional. The Ridge Amador Zins clearly reflect his dislike for that style. The grapes are harvested earlier than normal (for Amador) to make what Ridge terms a "claret" style wine, a wine less intensely fruity and lower in alcohol than typical for Amador-style Zinfandel.

The two '74 Zins fermented out to 14-1/2 percent alcohol, rather substantial for the "claret" style Draper espouses. For the '75, '76, and '77, Ridge was able to keep the alcohol down to lower levels, ranging from about 12 percent to almost 14 percent.

The exception was the Esola grapes in 1976 which, like at Carneros Creek, came in at very ripe levels. Ridge designated the resulting wine as their 1976 Late Harvest Zin-

had already fermented out too much sugar. He's not certain what kind of wine his '78 Esola will become.

Because of the heat wave ripening everything at once and insufficient fermenting capacity, Carneros Creek was unable to take the Esola Zinfandel grapes in 1979 at the time they reached acceptable sugar levels. The Eschen grapes came into the winery earlier at 24.8° Brix and Mahoney characterizes them as the best looking grapes he's seen yet from the Eschen vineyard.

The Carneros Creek Amador Zins are not the typical Amador-style Zinfandel. Although they are usually dark

"These wines display a unique smell and flavor often described as Amador dusty-briary, found in no other Zinfandel produced in California."

fandel. The majority of it was released as Late Harvest II, at 15.4 percent alcohol. Seven barrels of the wine made from somewhat riper grapes were given longer aging and will be released in the Fall of 1979 as Late Harvest I.

Having done the experiment with the '75 thru '77 Zins, Draper has modified his philosophy towards the wines somewhat. He now feels the Amador grapes are best harvested slightly over-ripe, around 25° Brix, to produce a wine of about 14 percent alcohol, more along the lines of his '74's. Reflecting this change in technique, Draper feels his '78 Fiddletown (Eschen), at about 15 percent alcohol, is his best effort yet with Amador grapes. Like Carneros Creek, his '78 Shenandoah (Esola) grapes came in very ripe. There are presently three distinct batches, two of which are still fermenting in early fall of 1979. Distilling Zinfandels with slight residual sugar, Draper has not yet decided the eventual fate of this wine.

Ridge established its reputation among California wine enthusiasts in the late '60's and very early '70's with its huge, intense, tannic Zinfandels. The 1970 Jimsomare and Occidental wines probably best typify this winemaking style. Since the mid-1970's, there has been grumbling among some Ridge aficionados about the trend of recent Ridge Zins towards a lighter, less alcoholic and intense style of wine. It seems clear that there has been a gradual change in the style of their wines, but certainly no lowering of the quality.

Draper contends that the aim of Ridge has not changed at all. He feels the so-called "old-style" Ridge wines were sometimes too one-dimensional and did not always develop the desired complexity with bottle age. He states a preference for making the darkest and most tannic wines that the grapes will give, but not at the expense of the complexity in the wine.

MOUNT VEEDER WINERY

Mike Bernstein, owner and winemaker at Mount Veeder Winery near Napa, purchased Esola grapes in both 1974 and 1975, primarily because of a lack of Napa Zinfandel grapes of comparable quality. Since Ridge and Carneros Creek established a contract with Esola in 1976, he has not had access to these grapes. Beginning with the 1977 crop, he has two acres of his own Zinfandel vines bearing upon Mount Veeder. His '78 is a big, Late Harvest style wine at 17.2 percent alcohol and 0.6 percent residual sugar.

Bernstein's winemaking has few significant differences from Carneros Creek's or Ridge's. Fermentation is in stainless steel with frequent pumping over the cap, on the whole, with the idea of obtaining more complexity and perhaps better bottle development. However, unlike

Ridge and Carneros Creek, barrel aging for about a year and a half is done in French Nevers oak.

The Mount Veeder's are probably the closest of the three to the typical Amador-style Zinfandel, but stylistically more akin to Carneros Creek than Ridge. The wines are normally more intense and tannic than Mahoney's, with a more distinct oak component. And, like Carneros Creek, they display an elegance and class not often found in Amador Zins.

Tasting Notes

RIDGE

Fiddletown 1975: Medium color, soft light spicy-oaky nose, very tart light spicy hard flavor, short spicy finish with somewhat sour aftertaste, slight tannin and at or beyond its peak, more berry-like and less Amador-like than the Shenandoah '75.

Shenandoah 1975: Medium color, strong berry-dusty perfume nose, soft spicy-dusty-cherry flavors, long soft spicy-earthy finish with light tannin, nearing its peak.

Fiddletown 1974: Medium color, strong spicy-cherry-perfume-horse collar complex nose, well glycerined, soft spicy floral developed flavors, medium soft spicy complex finish with little tannin, near its peak.

Shenandoah 1974: Medium-light color, soft spicy-gummed tannin powder slightly oaky nose, soft rich intense fruit and Amador dusty flavors, well glycerined, long soft spicy dusty developed finish, slight tannin but nearing its peak.

CARNEROS CREEK

Eschen 1975: Medium-dark color, intense chocolate slightly oaky-alcoholic nose, rough Amador dusty-cherry flavor, medium tannic cherry-salami finish, needs a year or two yet.

Esola 1975: Dark color, intense chocolate-cherry Amador Zin nose, soft rich spicy Amador dusty flavor, soft rich spicy dusty slightly stemmy finish, slight tannin but nearing its peak, softer richer more Amador dusty than the Eschen '75.

Eschen 1974: Medium-dark color, strong spicy perfume cherry slightly stemmy nose, soft light spicy Amador dusty flavor, light tart some-tannic finish, nearing its peak, harder and more austere than the Esola '74.

Esola 1974: Unflaged to the shoulder, medium-dark color, light fruity developed tobacco cigar-box complex nose, soft spicy cigar-box cedary slightly rough flavor, medium

'75 Zinfandel, Shenandoah, bottled March 1977
1975 was the coolest growing season in many years and despite the light rains early in the harvest, the weather held steadily. We harvested the Shenandoah vineyard in Amador County relatively early to achieve a soft, full, fruit style. The excellent wine shows the fruit typical of the area and should be enjoyable tasting by early fall, but will benefit from two or three years of bottle age. (10/17/77)

RIDGE wine is made with an emphasis on quality and naturalness that is rarely attempted. Our grapes are grown in select vineyards usually divided on the label, where they are left in open to peak naturally often at one less of quantity. We let the vines settle and are in small barrels, with only one cello treatment other than during harvest. We use the highest quality oak, so indicated on the label. Near Black Mountain on Monte Diablo Ridge, our main vineyard is 10 miles south of Palo Alto, 15 miles inland from the ocean, and over 2000 feet in elevation. Our rigorous selection on outgoing wines, at vintage time, is 100%. (10/17/77)

RIDGE CALIFORNIA ZINFANDEL SHENANDOAH 1975

SCHOOL HOUSE ROAD, SHENANDOAH VALLEY
BOTTLED MARCH 1977 ALCOHOL 12.1% BY VOLUME
PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS
17100 MONTE BELLO RD, CUPERTINO, CALIFORNIA

light developed spicy finish, little tannin and at or beyond its peak, a nicely developed complex wine.

MOUNT VEEDER

Esola 1975: Dark color, intense Amador-dusty spicy-salami nose, heavy intense tannic earthy-cherry somewhat dusty flavor, medium dusty-cherry oaky finish with some tannin, may improve some yet, lacks the roundness and balance of the '74.

Esola 1974: Dark color, intense minty pencil shavings somewhat oaky nose, heavy body, rich oaky minty intense fruit flavor with little Amador dust, medium minty-oaky-cherry finish, some tannin and needs several years yet, seems the youngest of all the wines.

Esola 1974 (American oak): Dark color, strong spicy-perfume cinnamon nose much different from the French oak but not easily identifiable as American oak, seems harder, more tannic, more Amador-style and less complex than the French oak.

Of the Ridge's, the Fiddletown '74 was the clear favorite. When the two '74's were first tasted by our group shortly after their release in early 1976, the disappointment in the wines was virtually unanimous. Most people had expected wines displaying a unique combination of the "old-style" Ridge power and the Amador-style brassiness. The wines seemed light, the slight amount of fruit intensity covered by the American oak, lacking in Amador character, and low tannin levels that indicated little aging potential. The '75's a year later merely reinforced this gloomy conclusion.

Expecting somewhat enfeebled, over-aged wines in this tasting, nearly all tasters were amazed at the wonder 3-1/2 years of bottle age had wrought on these wines. The '74's were two of the best examples of mature, developed Zinfandels we have tasted. The complexity and refinement Draper strives for in the Ridge wines had indeed appeared.

Among the Carneros Creeks, the '74 Esola appeared to be the choice of most tasters, with little preference among the other three. When this wine was tasted shortly after its release, it was a big black tannic Zinfandel for which many predicted a very long life. It, too, had developed very nicely into a complex and refined wine, but much earlier than most had expected. Perhaps the excessive bottle leakage was responsible for its early maturity.

Of the Mount Veeder's, the '74 was easily most preferred, although Bernstein seemed to have extracted more from the 1975 grapes than did Carneros Creek or Ridge. The two oaks produced quite distinct wines, but there was no clear preference between the two.

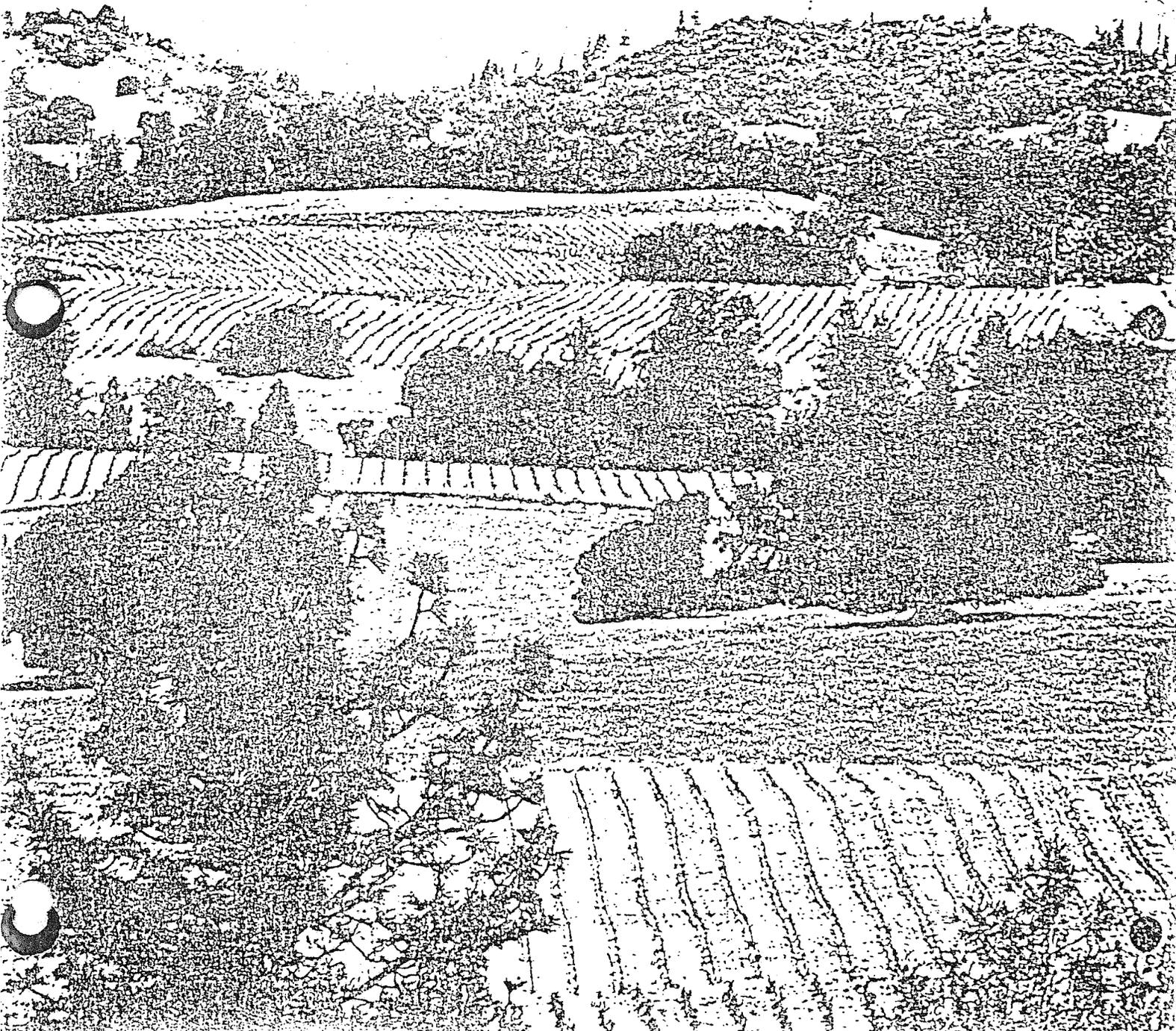
Both Draper's and Mahoney's characterization of the Esolas as possessing more richness and fruit was borne out in the tasting, although this difference seems to decrease as the wines age. As expected, the '74's were universally preferred over the '75's.

Among all the wines, there was a neatly even split between the Ridge Fiddletown '74, Carneros Creek Esola '74, and Mount Veeder '74. The choice was based more on stylistic preferences than on any perceived quality factors. All of the wines were fine examples of California Zinfandels, but distinctly not "typical" Amador-like Zinfandels.

AMADOR COUNTY

lost vineyards become an exciting discovery!

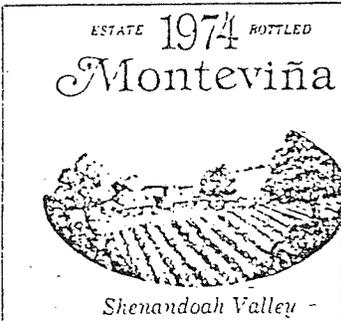
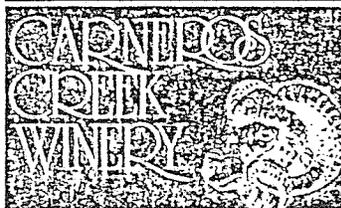
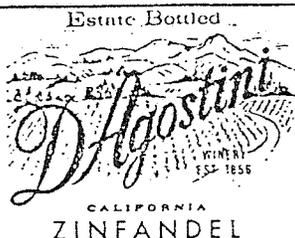
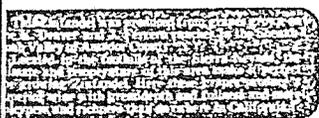
SAVE - HISTORICAL VALUE



CORTI BROTHERS

1974
AMADOR COUNTY

RIDGE
CALIFORNIA
ZINFANDEL
SHENANDOAH
1974



AMADOR COUNTY

are different from Shenandoah Valley grapes," declares Corti. "They are on opposite sides of a ridge and both the microclimate and the native vegetation are different. The wines are going to be lighter in color and in the intensity of the flavors. The grapes simply don't get as ripe." In their limited experience with making wines from both sides of the ridge, Francis Mahoney and Ridge winemaker Paul Draper agree with Corti that the wines from Fiddletown and Shenandoah vineyards are different. However, Ridge found their Fiddletown to be a bigger wine than the Shenandoah grapes produced. Mahoney observed that there were real differences but he was not yet prepared to generalize about the difference. In the three years he had received Eschen (Fiddletown) grapes they had varied greatly depending upon the section of the vineyard he received. Our tasting notes indicate that the winemakers have experiences that would lead to contradictory conclusions. At the moment, the wines need to be tasted over a broader range of vintages than are currently available before the distinctive differences can be defined.

The difference, we believe, is one of relative degree. The wines all have excellent color with a

AMADOR Zinfandels

BARGETTO WINERY 1973 Amador
Light to medium nose. Good fruity aroma although low in varietal character. Slight vanillin smell of oak barrels. Medium bodied. Very hard and firm on the palate. Fruity flavors are quite short for high alcohol and tannin.

\$2.95

CARNEROS CREEK 1974 Amador
Esola Vineyards, Shenandoah Valley. A lovely example of Amador Zinfandel. Rich, generous aromas full of berry and ripe "grapey" smells. Lovely, engaging intensity. Mouthfilling. Long round flavors with a suggestion of very ripe fruit in the forward Zinfandel berry-like flavors. Good aging potential. Soft enough to drink now with Pork Roast. An exceptional value.

\$5.00

CARNEROS CREEK WINERY 1974 Amador
Eschen Vineyards, Fiddletown. Dark red but not as deep as most Amador Zinfandels. Medium intensity nose of straightforward berry-like fruit and wood. Fairly full-bodied wine. Acid seems a bit high (unusual in an Amador Zin) which gives the wine a hard feel on the palate. Lasting fruit and tannin in the aftertaste. Drinkable now with Grilled Steak and Onions.
New Release.

\$3.50

CORTI BROTHERS 1973 Shenandoah
A portion of Sutter Home Zinfandel purchased by Darrell Corti and aged in Russian Oak "hogsheads" coopered in Portugal. The wine displays distinct piney, minty aromas and flavors that are quite surprising. Its body and texture are pure Amador in weight, underlying fruitiness and finish.

\$3.75

D'AGOSTINI WINERY NV California
Estate Bottled. In the old, old California tradition, this wine aged to near senility in ancient tanks before bottling. Old, slightly oxidized aroma and flavor. Lingering aftertaste suggests Zinfandel heritage. Nice wine with macaroni and ground beef.

\$2.99

GEMELLO WINERY NV California
Lot 72-A. We reviewed this wine in the November, 1974 issue prior to its release and were quite impressed. Now on the market, the wine seems to have fallen apart and displays distinctly non-Amador character, as if it had been blended with wine from another area. Slight grassy, stinky quality and low fruit in nose and flavors. Lacks typical Amador fullness.

\$3.50

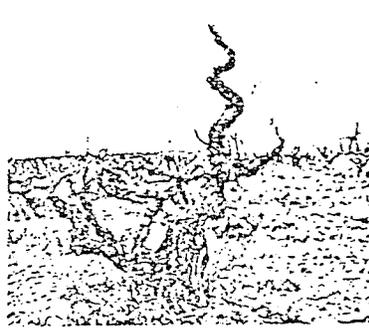
HARBOR WINERY 1973 Shenandoah
Deaver Vineyard. Fairly intense nose with ripe fruit and wood components. Full in the mouth. Young, harsh flavors with ample fruit in evidence and noticeable wood. Slightly hot, tannic finish. This wine should improve with 2-4 years of bottle age.

\$3.75

purplish cast that seems to hang on even as the wine gains bottle age. As Corti states, "The flavors are more akin to Rhone wines than to Claret. It is very difficult to make an elegant wine of Amador Zinfandel." Intense flavors seem characteristic and a number of the Shenandoah Valley wines, in particular, have a grapy, jam-like aroma. As a whole, wines that display the high quality of the Amador grapes result in remarkably few flaws.

None of this surprises the grape growers. It is, however, a source of quiet amusement for experienced growers like Ken Deaver, John Ferrero and Ernest Esola to be "discovered." They knew the vines were there all the time.

As a matter of fact, the vineyards not only precede the oldest of Amador County residents but precede the establishment of the oldest of California's 323 bonded wineries. The first vines were planted in 1856 or before. Throughout Prohibition and the times of great vineyard devastation from Phylloxera, the vines of Amador continued to pump out their harvests for home winemaking enthusiasts in a market area that spread from the Dakotas to the San Francisco Bay. What the "discovery" of Amador County means is that the richly flavored Amador County wines, which home winemakers have so long kept to themselves, are now reaching retail shelves. What's more, they are being produced by some of the best talent within the California winemaking fraternity. We heartily welcome their arrival. ☞



Top: Eschen Vineyard near Fiddletown. Left: Gnarled vine. Right: Grower John Ferrero with Darrell Corti.

AMADOR

tasting notes

🌸 MONTEVINA WINES 1974 Shenandoah
Gott Vineyard. Very dark red. Rich Zinfandel nose with a touch of Amador "grape jam" character. Medium-full bodied. A bit harsh but with an engaging, lush, mouthfilling roundness. Fairly intense Zinfandel and ripe-berry flavors. Long, long finish. Ample tannin suggests 2-4 years of age before drinking. Could be tried now with Lamb Cutlets and Sausage. A fine value.
New Release. 🍷 🐄 🍷 \$2.75

MT. VEEDER VINEYARDS 1974 Amador
Esola Vineyards. Medium intensity aromas of well-ripened grapes and alcohol. The fruit is subdued. Very big and harsh in the mouth. Grapy, vanillin flavors are pleasantly rich. Slightly hot, tannic finish. Would be enjoyable with Steak Diane.
🍷 🐄 🍷 \$5.00

🌸 RIDGE VINEYARDS 1974 Fiddletown
Eschen Ranch, Amador County. Deep red color. Tight nose with a full bouquet of oak and ripe Zinfandel, fruit underneath. Full, lush feel on the palate. Rich, fruity entry and mouthfilling ripe-berry flavor with very evident woody components. Slight harshness in the finish will diminish with bottle age. Very enjoyable now with savory dishes such as Brisket, stuffed with Minced Beef and Capers.
New Release. 🍷 🐄 🍷 \$5.00

🌸 RIDGE VINEYARDS 1974 Shenandoah
Amador County. In comparison to the Ridge Fiddletown, this wine seems less full and lush in the mouth. The light to medium intensity nose is pleasantly fruity with good Zinfandel character and a touch of wood. There is firmness on the palate that gives the ripe Zinfandel and oak flavors a slightly hard, not rounded quality. The finish is fruity and slightly hot. Bottle age may bring smoothness that is wanting here.
New Release. 🍷 🐄 🍷 \$4.75

STORY VINEYARDS 1974 Shenandoah
This wine has gained popularity for its overdone, rai-siny quality that is reminiscent of Port. But Port, it isn't, and late harvest Zinfandel, it doesn't resemble.
🍷 🌞 🍷 \$5.00

🌸 SUTTER HOME WINERY 1973 Shenandoah
Deaver and Ferrero Ranches. Medium intensity nose. Slightly sweet, ripe Zinfandel character. Medium-full bodied with a "hard" impression in the mouth. Grapy, varietal flavor with a touch of wood. Fairly tannic finish. Needs age to soften and round out.
🍷 🐄 🍷 \$3.75

🌸 ZD WINES 1973 Sierra
71% Shenandoah Valley (Gott Vineyard); 29% Clements-District. Fairly intense nose is slightly Port-like with an attractive herbal character to the fruit. Very obvious wood blends with Zinfandel character in the flavors. More claret than Amador in style.
🍷 🐄 🍷 \$3.95

ACTIVE FERMENT IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Thomas R. Hill

Like the entire wine industry, Amador County's Shenandoah Valley has been the scene of dramatic changes in the last few years.

For many years, the Valley was the sleepy domain of diversified agriculture, with the growing of Zinfandel and Mission grapes for home winemakers merely a marginally profitable sideline for these farmers. D'Agostini Winery, producing simple generic wines, was the only existing winery.

The establishment of Montevina in 1973 by Cary Gott marked the first new post-Prohibition winery.

Although specializing in Zinfandel and Cabernet, Gott also produces, perhaps, California's finest Barbera and carbonic maceration wine. His Sauvignon Blanc was the first premium Amador white wine.

He has experimented with Merlot and Chardonnay, with disappointing results. His now-discontinued Nebbiolo is the only California bottling of that varietal. A block of Mission vines are used to produce a spicy Mission del Sol dessert wine. A few Primitivo and Brunello vines complete his vineyard.

Veterinarian Eugene Story also opened his winery in 1973, making well-priced Zinfandel from an old vineyard under the Cosumnes River label, now labeled Story Vineyards.

Lee Sobon established the Shenandoah Vineyards in 1977, producing Cabernet and Zinfandel from Deaver vineyard grapes. He has planted Cabernet and Sauvignon Blanc.

His primary wines are El Dorado County Chenin Blanc, Zinfandel from Eschen's Fiddletown vineyard and Dal Porto's 85 year old vineyard, and Cabernet from the Baldinelli vineyard.

Sobon recognized the potential of the Shenandoah Valley for producing premium dessert wines. A Zinfandel Port won a gold medal in last year's Amador County Fair. A Black Muscat from Eschen grapes is probably California's best example of that varietal. A Mission del Sol passito wine and Mission Cream Sherry are made from Eschen and Dal Porto grapes, along with tiny amounts of Angelica.

Founded in 1979, the Baldinelli Shenandoah Valley Vineyards produces white and red Zinfandel and Cabernet, all from their own grapes. A 7 1/2 acre planting of Sauvignon Blanc will soon be bearing, with plans to add a few acres of Semillon.

Also a highly innovative winemaker, Ed Baldinelli feels that Amador makes perhaps too intense a wine. He plans to try toning down the Amador intensity in his Cabernet by blending in small amounts of Sauvignon Blanc, a technique often employed in Italy and the Rhone.

Scott Harvey helped launch Santino Wines with two White Zins in 1979, from purchased grapes.

Zinfandel from D'Agostini and Cowan Family Farm has produced an '80 Early Release Zin, made partly by carbonic maceration. More conventional Amador Zin is made from D'Agostini and Eschen grapes. Cabernet from El Dorado County grapes complete the line.

Relying on his experience in Germany, Harvey has released an '80 White Zin (9% alcohol, 5% sugar, .95 acid) from the Valley's Clock Springs Vineyard that one writer described as being the first California wine with the steely quality of a Mosel.

A third 1979 winery is Beau Val, managed by Nan and Bob Francis. They specialize in white and red Zinfandel from purchased Shenandoah Valley grapes, until their vineyards of Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel, and Barbera are bearing.

Kenworthy Vineyards will release their first wine this summer, a 14.9% alcohol Zinfandel '79 from the Potter-Cowan vineyard.

Owner John Kenworthy plans to specialize in Zinfandel, Cabernet, and Chardonnay from Sierra foothill vineyards. He does not like the traditional high-alcohol Amador Zin and seeks more a claret style in his red wines.

Ben Zeitman's Amador-Foothill Winery has three different 1980 Zins from the Potter-Cowan, Eschen, and the 115 year old John Downing vineyard. An El Dorado Chenin Blanc and a white Zin were released in May.

He has eight acres planted to Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet, with an additional planting of Chenin Blanc, Barbera, and Semillon planned.

Zeitman is interested in capturing the Amador fruit in his wines without the high alcohols. All three of his Zins are less than 14% alcohol.

Karly Wines crushed last Fall Zinfandel from the Valley's Upton vineyard, and Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc from coastal vineyards. Owner "Buck" Cobb has planted Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel on his property in the northwest part of the Valley.

675 words

Wed., Feb. 9, 1977 ☆ S.F. EXAMINER—Page 33

Wine with Narsai David



Guest columnist

Mining the Gold Country

There's a new find in the Mother Lode. Or rather a rediscovery of Amador County as a rich source of top quality zinfandel grapes. Back in the '50s, the gold country boasted only one major winery, D'Agostini.

I remember, one long ago day, driving through such quaint towns as Murphy's, Daffodil Hill, Volcano, certainly not thinking of wines and vines.

Then, driving out from Jackson, near the town of Plymouth, I was astounded to see a patch of vine neatly sliced into the mesquite and back brush of the rolling hills. Soon another, then another and finally I was surrounded by lush vineyards. A final turn up the hill brought us to D'Agostini Winery, founded half a century earlier with grapevines actually dating back to 1856.

D'Agostini was known for its honest, everyday, jug wines. A dry white Muscat, a "Burgundy" made of Carignane and Zinfandel and a "Reserve Burgundy" were the selections. This latter wine was produced tirelessly of Zinfandel and aged a minimum of three years in wooden casks. The price was a nostalgic one, about \$1.50 per gallon.

As the sons of D'Agostini started an expansion plan, and mesquite bushes gave way to new vineyards, production increased enough to ship the wines into Sacramento and San Francisco.

One of the first merchants to recognize the great potential of these Zinfandel grapes was Darrell Corti, the owner of a Sacramento gourmet and wine shop. He had a friend, Charles Myers, who owns the Harbor Winery in Sacramento. Myers was then experimenting with Mission and Zinfandel grapes from the vineyards of Ken Deaver in Plymouth. The rich, lusty fragrance of the Harbor Zinfandel, plus a little Sacramento area chauvinism, led Corti to introduce the wine to Sutter Home Winery in the Napa Valley.

Sutter made an experimental lot in 1968 and soon was using gold country Zinfandel exclusively. It is now the only red wine Sutter Home makes and is considered one of the finest Zinfandels produced in the state.

By the early '70s Amador County wine, both from Fiddletown and the Shenandoah Valley, were finding their way onto the labels of Mayacamas, David Bruce, Ridge, Carneros Creek and other distant wineries.

As the good news about the Zinfandel discovery spread, Amador County finally got a new winery on its own soil. Montevina was founded in 1972 by Cary and Vickie Gott to produce exciting wine from their own vineyards. In partnership with his father-in-law, a retired banker named W. E. Field, Gott is off to a fantastic start. Trained at the Fresno State College Department of Oenology, the young Gott is quite an experimenter. With established Zinfandel grapes as his mainstay, he started out with Zinfandel Nuevo in the style of a delicate, light Beaujolais Nouveau. He then made a White Zinfandel, which is kept almost as clear as a white wine by very carefully crushing and pressing the grapes to avoid coloration from the skins. The first lots of Barbera and Ruby Cabernet are astonishing in the rich intensity of their flavors.

The Montevina winery may very well hit pay dirt again, with the new test plot of Italian Nebbiolo just planted. This is the finest of the red grapes produced in the Piedmont area of northern Italy. If the luscious earthiness of the grape aromas from Amador County develop in the style of the Piedmont, Californians will have a new Gold Country wine to brag about.

Amador County Zinfandel:

Liquid Gold In The Foothills

It is not uncommon today for blind tastings of Zinfandels to attract a huge turnout and to be conducted with as much solemnity as a tasting of Cabernet Sauvignons or Classified Growths. But it certainly is surprising when you realize that only a few years ago Zinfandel was a blending wine only, reserved for the red generics and port-type wines. When varietal Zinfandels were made, they received little attention and care at the wineries; they weren't aged so much as they were placed in giant old redwood tanks and set aside until the important wines were tended to. Then suddenly, with the beginning of the wine boom and the rush to plant varietals, Zinfandel moved from obscurity to stardom as an interesting, unique wine that vintners began to proudly display. As the wine began to be discovered by consumers and as winemakers brought it out of the closets, new areas emerged as Zinfandels country. At the present time one of the most talked-about regions linked with Zinfandel is Amador County.

In Amador itself life has been pretty tranquil ever since the gold mines were abandoned; most of the inhabitants had never heard of any wine boom. Amador County is part of the so-called Mother Lode region in the foothills of the Sierras. However, it is one of the oldest viticultural regions in California. According to Leon Adams there were more

by Norman S. Roby



This Zinfandel was produced by the K. Deaver and J. Ferrero in the Doah Valley of Amador County. Located in a climate...

Zinfandels of this type should be at least four or five years old before consumption and will be good at ten years of age and more. This wine will eventually throw a deposit in the bottle and, when that happens, should be decanted before serving.

...basis on quality... Our grapes... identified on... en to peak... We let the... only rare... s are not... ar Black... ineyard... from... r re... ting... all... (7).

... famous by Bret Harte... the... typical of the... of small-coopera... this summer, b... ch full potential... PD (1/7)

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than 100 wineries operating in the Mother Lode area as late as 1890. But Prohibition closed most of them, and there was no revival with Repeal. Mother Nature makes grapegrowing difficult in the foothills, but the vineyards remained in production, mainly to supply local amateur winemakers and occasionally to sell to large outside wineries.

Many of the present Amador vineyards were originally planted around 1900, and the area hasn't changed much since then. It remains a relic of "the old wild west" where the primary pastimes are hunting, gossiping, brawling and tipping. However, back in the 1850s the area was bristling with activity, and Amador County was part of Calaveras County. Around 1853, it was decided that the large county should be divided into two. The first name suggested was Washington County, but many didn't like this eastern-sounding name and suggested Amador instead. After some heated discussions when the time came for the bill to be voted on those favoring Amador hit upon the idea of serving plenty of local wine to those in opposition. The wine was enjoyed well into the night, and before the Washington contingent could come to its senses, the bill authorizing the Amador County name had passed without debate.

Today Amador County consists of numerous small towns which normally have one general store, a schoolhouse, and a cemetery. The names of various towns send you back to another era: Jackson, Volcano, Sutter Creek, and Chili Gulch. The present-day town of Plymouth was once called "Pokerville," and nearby Ione which began as a trading post used to be called "Bedbug" and was later changed to "Freezout." Fiddletown, which got its name because the young men of the town were always "fiddling" around, was briefly changed to the name of Oleta. But Fiddletown was immortalized in a story by Bret Harte, and the original name was restored in 1920.

Throughout it all the old vineyards survived as part of the local color and tradition. Long before anyone had ever heard of Amador Zinfandel, the local residents took part in an annual rite which consisted of deer hunting in the fall and making wine as soon as the hunting season was over. After one had bagged a deer or two, it was traditional to purchase some local grapes, either Zinfandel or Mission, most often a mixture, and make some wine which would enable you to get through till next hunting season. In the early 1960s, a few outsiders would occasionally venture into Amador to buy some grapes for home winemaking. But this didn't pose any threat, and, besides, there was always the D'Agostini Winery in Plymouth to supply the local folks with whatever Burgundy, Claret, or Sauterne they needed.

Life in the Mother Lode would have continued unchanged except for two related circumstances. The first was that the amateur winemakers made some interesting wines from Amador Zinfandel; the second, was that rising grape prices in Napa and elsewhere forced some smaller wineries to investigate other areas as possible alternatives. By the early 1970s Amador County Zinfandel was creating quite a stir. Now in late September and early October the long time residents hear the sounds of trucks hauling Amador Zinfandel to Napa, Sonoma, Livermore, and Cupertino, disturbing their peace, frightening away the deer, and removing their winter joy and comfort. But

Amador has suddenly come alive, and the growers are jumping higher in glee than the celebrated frogs of Calaveras County in the annual Jumping Frog Jubilee held in Angels Camp each May.

When you look back upon Zinfandel's rise to popularity, the two primary moving forces were Ridge Vineyards and Sutter Home Winery. They made the varietal wine "respectable." Ridge had the audacity to make Zinfandel the same way one makes a classical Cabernet Sauvignon, leaving it on the skins for several days and aging it in expensive oak. At about the same time Sutter Home in St. Helena defied tradition by looking outside Napa and Sonoma for grapes. At one time Sutter Home bottled more wines under its label than most large wineries, but it is now moving toward specializing in Zinfandel wines made exclusively from Amador County grapes. Ridge, on the other hand, always made just a few wines but scurried all over California in search of choice Zinfandel grapes. In 1974 Ridge went to Amador and made two different Zinfandels which are scheduled for release later this year. According to Ridge, Amador grapes "show real promise" and they may continue buying Amador grapes for years to come.

With Ridge joining Sutter Home, Amador County is destined to be regarded nationally as a prime Zinfandel wine region. But they are not alone in their esteem for Amador. One can find Zinfandels on the market today made from Amador grapes from many wineries: Mayacamas, Carneros Creek, Mount Veeder, Harbor Winery, Monteviña, Concannon (a rosé), Gemello, Corti Brothers (a private label), ZD Winery, and D'Agostini. Geyser Peak Winery buys a good deal of Zinfandel and blends it with wines from other regions, and on a lesser scale, Caymus Vineyard makes a Zinfandel with some Amador wine in it. For several years, until 1972, Robert Mondavi Winery bought some Zinfandel from an Amador grower. The Christian Brothers have on occasion also purchased Amador grapes. Neither of these does any longer. One problem was that in the first few years, some of the old Amador growers couldn't understand why the premium wineries would get a little upset if Mission grapes were mixed in with the Zinfandel.

One could easily put together a tasting of Zinfandels made from Amador County grapes. In fact, I recently took part in a tasting of Amador Zinfandel vintages from 1964-1974, sampling some 27 different wines which included an early attempt which was similar to a vermouth and ended with a vintage Port made from Amador Zinfandel. It was quite an eye-opening event, not just because of the number of wines available but because even when made by different producers the wine exhibited a highly distinct style.

Amador Zinfandels have a unique style, more so than most other wines from some of the better-known and more prestigious regions. In general, they tend to be an extremely dark ruby in color, with a heavy, full body; high in alcohol and tannin; and when young, they are highly perfumed, but not in the "briary" sense. The aroma is more like that of intensely fresh, ripe grapes. With their high alcohol and tannin, young Amador Zinfandels taste somewhat coarse. But given good aging in oak, they can develop a spicy aroma and flavor, which, combined with the strong berry character, imparts some complexity to the mature wines.

Although for a moment they could fool an experienced taster into thinking an aged Amador Zinfandel resembles a Claret, they are too full bodied and rough to sustain that impression for long.

Amador Zinfandels, it should be mentioned, are not for everyone. Many well-versed wine tasters object to their heavy style. If you especially enjoy California Zinfandels made in that fresh, fruity style similar to a Beaujolais, it is possible the Amador Zinfandels may strike you as too heady and inelegant. However, to me, with their great deal of body and extract, the Amador wines resemble full-bodied northern Italian wines or heavy Côtes du Rhône reds. They do share a similar high degree of ripeness which you either like or dislike in a red wine.

But in any case, Amador Zinfandels are worth trying, and a few of the wineries involved have national distribution. And besides, all serious California wine buffs should be familiar with Amador, if for no other reason than the fact that the region deserves to be recognized as an official appellation of origin. This is especially so because it is primarily Zinfandel country. Of the 900 acres planted, almost 700 acres consist of Zinfandel vines, and 400 of these are ten years or more old. Actually, much of the Amador Zinfandel was planted in 1900, and even more surprising is the fact that these gnarled old vines are still producing quality fruit.

In location, Amador County is about 40 miles east and little south of Sacramento which places it in the foothills of the Sierras. The terrain is mostly rolling hills which make grape growing somewhat difficult. Depending on where you are, the elevation in Amador varies from 1200 to 1700 feet, and based on degree days and heat summation, the climate of Amador is a high Region III or low IV. During the summer the days in Amador are quite warm, often over 100°, but the area consistently has cooling night breezes that give its grapes a unique character. In the Shenandoah Valley, one of Amador's finest grape growing regions, a cooling air mass rises from the lower valley floor and reaches the vineyards on a regular evening schedule. Much of the soil consists of shallow decomposed red granite. The hot summer days and cool evenings tend to cause the grapes to shrivel and thus concentrate the juice, but also enable the Zinfandel grapes to retain fairly high acidity. Largely because of the unique conditions, growers can obtain high sugar, around 25-26 Balling or more, with good acidity; the wines are high in alcohol and tannin and are concentrated in flavors.

The growers often lose a good percentage of their Zinfandel either to spring frosts which are quite persistent or to the intense heat during July and August. But the fruit that survives is often remarkable in varietal character. On an average, the Amador Zinfandel vineyards yield somewhere between two and a half to five tons per acre, or slightly below the average productivity for Zinfandel in the coastal regions.

Most large wine producers have shied away from Amador since the economics of grape growing there make it unattractive and uncongenial to any large winery. Somehow the growers managed to survive, supplying grapes to amateur winemakers and periodically selling to larger wineries in years of shortage. Others went to Amador simply because the prices were dirt cheap, that is until the Zinfandel craze set in. For years the only active winery in

Amador after Prohibition was D'Agostini Winery in Plymouth, the area's oldest winery. The vineyards were originally planted in 1856, and D'Agostini bought the winery in 1911. It still specializes in what might be called *vin de pays*—honest, decent drinkable wine. D'Agostini Claret and Burgundy wines are made from Zinfandel, Carignane, and a little Mission and are sold by the bottle and half-gallon. The winery, now a historical landmark, makes a good quality Estate-Bottled Zinfandel, but this and the other wines are seldom available outside the immediate area.

But the revival of interest in Amador as a wine region came from outside forces. The first Zinfandel from Amador that caught anybody's attention was made by Charles Myers of Sacramento, who was making wine as a serious hobby in 1965. Myers is an English teacher at a Sacramento College who recently started a small commercial winery called Harbor which today is noted for its Zinfandel and Chardonnay wines. To him goes the distinction of being the "discoverer" of Amador Zinfandel.

By late 1967 and early 1968 Bob Trincherio of Sutter Home was beginning to feel squeezed by rising grape prices, which were then "soaring" to \$300 a ton for Napa Zinfandel. He had been making some private label wines for Corti Brothers, Sacramento wine merchants/grocers who were close friends of Myers. Hearing of the situation, Darrell Corti arranged for Trincherio to sample the Zinfandels from '65 and '66 made by Myers. Impressed by what he tasted, in the spring of 1968 Trincherio visited Ken Deaver, a Shenandoah Valley grower, and arranged to purchase Zinfandel from the coming vintage.

The '68 Sutter Home Amador Zinfandel from the Deaver Ranch was aged in Limousin oak and released in January of 1971. This event pretty much put an end to deer hunting in Amador. Before too long, word spread about this unusual Zin and the wine eventually became a collector's item. Myers, Corti, and Trincherio continued to make wines from the region in '69 and '70, and by the release of the 1970 Amador wines which were superb, the rush was on—this time for grapes, not gold in the foothills.

Between 1968 and 1971, Sutter Home made its Zinfandel from grapes grown on the Deaver Ranch. By 1972, the demand had increased so much that Trincherio went to a neighboring vineyard owned by John Ferrero and blended the Deaver and Ferrero lots together. Both of these vineyards are in the subregion or pocket known as the Shenandoah Valley, not the one immortalized in song, but one winning many praises these days. Harbor Winery makes its Zinfandel from Deaver grapes. Since 1968 Corti Brothers has offered an Amador Zinfandel; each year Darrell Corti selects certain lots from wines made at Sutter Home, and then he ages his Zinfandel in his own cooperage at the winery. So the Harbor, Sutter Home, and Corti Brothers Zinfandels are all made primarily from the same vineyard, but they are always somewhat different in taste. These three producers, along with Cary Gott of Montevina, feel that the Shenandoah Valley merits special and official recognition as a wine region.

More and more, you will see different place names appearing on bottles of Amador Zinfandel which can be somewhat confusing. Some wineries simply use Amador; others will refer to the Shenandoah Valley, and still a few producers identify the wine by a particular vineyard. The

most important vineyards often singled out are Deaver, Ferrero, Monteña, and Esola—all of which are located in the Shenandoah Valley. Eshen, another sought-after old vineyard, is located near the town of Fiddletown, and one Ridge '74 Zinfandel will carry the Fiddletown appellation, while the second will bear the Shenandoah Valley designation. The St. Amant Vineyard mentioned on the label of the delightful Concannon Zinfandel Rosé is a new one located near Jackson to the south; Concannon is soon to release the '75 Zinfandel Rosé and hopes to make a regular Amador Zinfandel in 1976.

Now when we turn from the specific vineyards to the producers, the picture becomes even fuzzier, since occasionally the Amador wine is blended with wines from other regions or for some reason may not be identified. In 1972 Mayacamas made a now famous Late Harvest Zinfandel with immense fruitiness and depth and an alcohol content of around 17 per cent. This wine was actually made from the oldest Zinfandel vines belonging to Monteña Vineyards. When last available, this Late Harvest wine was selling in California for \$12 a bottle. Caymus Vineyard in Rutherford made a '74 Zinfandel with a "California" designation that was made from Amador, Sonoma, Napa, and Lodi grapes; the '75 Caymus Zinfandel was made from Amador, Napa, and Lake County grapes in equal proportion. The Amador grapes are purchased from the D'Agostini Ranch, not related to the winery of the same name. The Caymus Zinfandel is a lighter, fresher wine, ideal for sipping and drinking with many types of food.

At the moment, Geysler Peak is the largest winery using Amador Zinfandel, but how much is in the winery's "California" Zinfandel is not known. Geysler Peak has a long-term grape contract with Monteña Vineyards in Amador, and many consider this to have been one of the better moves made by the winery under its present ownership. The non-vintage Voltaire Zinfandel has a pleasant dark color and fresh grapy aroma that tempts one to say these fine features are derived from Amador grapes. It is a good wine for the money, lacking only some wood aging for greater complexity and interest. Geysler Peak is now beginning to move toward vintaged-dated varietals, and it has a '73 Zinfandel on tap that should be worth looking for shortly.

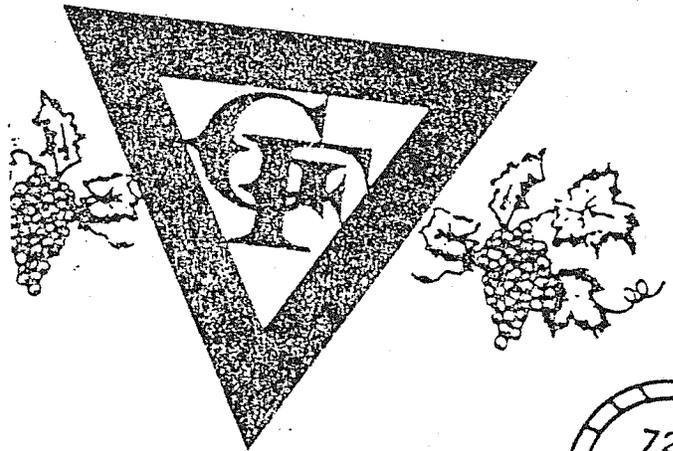
The Gemello Winery in Mountain View offers small quantities of Amador Zinfandel which are usually distinguished by "Lot 71A" or "Lot 72A" with the "A" standing for Amador. The wines are purchased from Sutter Home and aged and finished in Mountain View. Gemello favors using Nevers oak for the Amador Zinfandel which adds its own distinctive character. Mario Gemello also likes to give his wines lots of time in the oak, averaging around three years or so. Gemello Zinfandels are sometimes difficult to find, but the Amador wines are extremely well

de Perdrix
ZINFANDEL WINE

Produced and Bottled By
Sutter Home Winery
St. Helena, California
Alcohol 12% By Volume

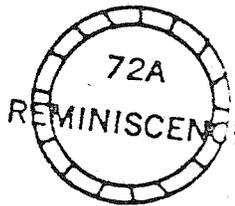
PERDRIX (Eye of the Partridge) —
ZINFANDEL: Deaver Vineyard
is made from 100% Zinfandel grapes.
The grapes are crushed, and the juice
from the skins immediately, hence a
delightful, with just a blush of the grape.
Amount of sweetness and can be served chilled

Gemello



CALIFORNIA
ZINFANDEL
LOT 72-A

ALCOHOL 13.8% BY VOLUME
MADE AND BOTTLED BY



1973
SIERRA FOOTHILLS
ZINFANDEL

Zinfandel Grapes: 71% from the
Sierra Foothills and 29% from Clements

Produced and Bottled by

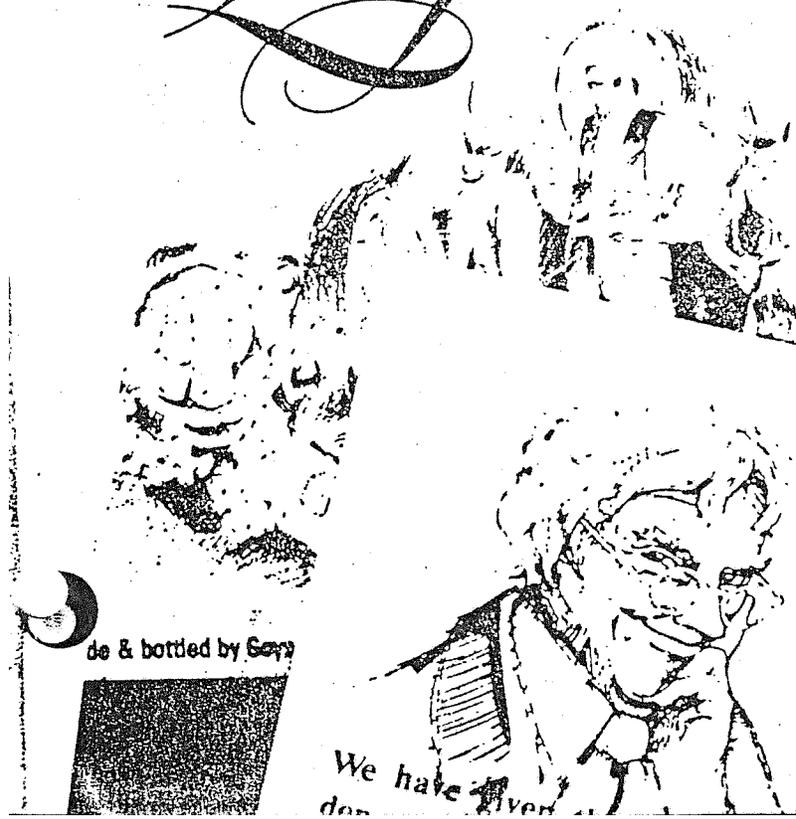
Tommaso
Tommaso

SUTTER HOME, CALIFORNIA

12% BY VOLUME

en
TIT
Produ

Zinfandel



made and worth seeking out. While Amador's reputation was gained from the activities of outsiders, there is now some excitement created from within by a new, small winery in Plymouth-Montevina. Managed by Cary Gott, a young and talented winemaker, Montevina now consists of around 175 acres including about 100 acres of Zinfandel. He has added small plantings of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Ruby Cabernet, Barbera, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Nebbiolo to see how they will fare in Amador. After taking over the old vineyard in 1971, Gott first made wines under the Montevina label in 1973. Although he only makes about 2500 cases annually, every time Gott makes a new wine he manages to catch everyone's attention. Also, because he is adamant about pricing his wines attractively, Montevina has developed quite a following in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Beginning in 1973 when he was still temporarily working out of his basement, Gott got off to an auspicious debut. Lacking cooperage and being daring by nature, he made what he called "Zinfandel Nuevo" by the carbonic maceration process which has since become a big fad. However, the Montevina "Nuevo" in '73 and '74 are two of the finest nouveaux wines made in California-intensely fresh and fruity in aroma and flavor and delightfully spritzly. The '75 Nuevo made from grapes picked during rains is full of tartrates, but is also delightful to drink. Montevina also offers a White Zinfandel, both a dry and sweet version in 1975, and a regular Amador Zinfandel that while not as full bodied as others is well balanced and extremely attractive. Montevina, both as a source of grapes and as an innovative winery, has helped establish Amador County in California wine circles.

But Gott is very much interested in the other varieties as well as Zinfandel. So far the Montevina Sauvignon Blanc and Barbera have been well received, being strong on varietal character and intensely fruity.

But at the moment, the larger story still rests with Sutter Home Winery which has decided to make only Amador County wines. All Sutter Home Zinfandel has been first rate with only minor variations in the different vintages. The winery now produces a White Zinfandel going under the "Oeil de Perdrix" designation, made fresh and fruity with a touch of sweetness. In 1974 Sutter Home made a special lot of Late Harvest Zinfandel which will need much more time in wood and bottle before one can say whether it is as interesting as the '72 Mayacamas Late Harvest wine. This Sutter Home Zinfandel has around 16 per cent alcohol and is amazingly bone dry. It will be worth watching for in the next few years.

At one time, Bob Trinchero was seriously considering blending some Cabernet Sauvignon into his Amador Zinfandels for added complexity, but has since abandoned the project after several experiments. This brings up an

de & bottled by Gott

We have given

interesting point about Amador Zinfandel—the wines are certainly good but they are by no means as capable of complexity as are those of a few other regions. We should not position it as “the” Zinfandel growing region, which a few writers have already done.

But when the '68 Sutter Home Amador Zinfandel was recently tasted, it was still quite powerful and had developed a beautiful spicy aroma and flavor. With time, and this is worth noting, the Zinfandels made from the old Amador vines do acquire quite interesting features. When young, however, they appear fat, awkward, closed-in, and somewhat unappealing. But after some bottle aging, they come around nicely, developing that regional spiciness in bouquet and flavor and acquiring a delightful “sweet” sort of finish, characteristic of mature, full-bodied “sweet” sort of finish, characteristic of mature, full-bodied Zinfandels. When you taste them try to keep in mind their slow-developing nature. From my own experiences, it seems quite possible for Amador Zinfandels to reach their peak some ten years or more after the vintage.

But as is unfortunately true of most California wines, they are seldom cellared long enough to develop their full potential. A few '72 Amador Zinfandels are still available, and if you are lucky enough to find some, put them away until 1980 or later. Amador County Zinfandel is usually harvested two to three weeks before the Zinfandel from Napa and Sonoma, so Amador growers escaped the problems caused elsewhere by late rains in 1972. The '73 harvest in Amador is considered to be on the light side only by Amador standards; the wines from this vintage are still quite full bodied and fruity, and should age well into the 1980s. But as you know, '74 is considered to be the year for red wines in California, and the Amador Zinfandels sampled from the tanks hold out much promise and should become fantastic wines. During the '75 harvest it rained even in Amador County, but since the clusters were reduced in size by both frost and heat, most of the Zinfandel was picked with little evidence of mold or rot. So while the '73s and '74s are the real gems to look for, the '75 Amador wines may be the only Zinfandels worth drinking.

It used to be maintained that you could grow Zinfandel anywhere in California, but this is no longer true. Zinfandel ripens late in the season along with Cabernet Sauvignon, but unlike the hardy, tough Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel has very tight, compact clusters and is quite subject to bunch rot in wet or humid regions. When grown on the floor of the Napa Valley, Zinfandel usually develops some bunch rot. But in Amador, the clusters are uncharacteristically loose and the vineyards are dry with well-drained soils: they thereby avoid this tendency to develop bunch rot on almost all fronts.

Today, Zinfandel lovers, and there are many of them, fall generally into three different camps. No longer can one discuss Zinfandel without being asked to define one's terms and to identify particular styles of wine. There are those who favor the fresh, fruity, light Zinfandel often described as “brambly” in taste and similar to a young Beaujolais in style. Here, I have in mind those delightful wines made by the Christian Brothers, Louis Martini, Sebastiani, and the altogether pleasant new wine from The Monterey Vineyard. These are “drinking” or sipping wines. Secondly, there are Zinfandels that are full flavored, medium bodied, made in a

balanced and somewhat refined style, such as those offered by Souverain, Oakville, Simi, and in 1972 by Robert Mondavi and Clos du Val. These are either enjoyed immediately or laid away for a few years.

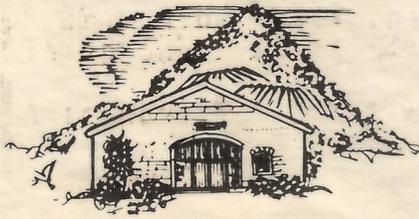
Then there is the third style of Zinfandel which I call the “hairy-chested school.” These are the *heavy-sipping*, extremely tannic Zinfandels that are often described as “chewy.” I have in mind the Ridge Occidental Zinfandels, David Bruce Late Harvest Dry, Joseph Swan '70, Ridge '70 Geyserville, and perhaps Clos du Val '73 Zinfandel. These are the high alcohol brutes with immense depth of fruit and loads of tannin which demand years of cellaring.

Within this over simplified scheme of Zinfandels, it would be a mistake in judgment to equate Amador Zinfandels with the latter school. The reason is that the style of Amador wines is more of a factor of the growing conditions than of the winemaking process. They are high in alcohol by nature, rather than from any willfulness on the vintner's part. Those who dislike the Amador wines have criticized them for their obsessive high alcohol, positioning them with the other faddishly “big” wines from California. But what should be mentioned is that the Amador Zinfandels have the needed structure and body to support the alcohol, and they have plenty of fruit to balance with the high tannin. No matter who so far has made Zinfandels from Amador, there always has been a definite, regional style discernible. Like them or not, tasters should judge the Amador wines on their own merits within the context of a definite Amador County style.

Ironically, as this report is being written about the coming of age of Zinfandel and the recognition of Amador as Zinfandel country, Dr. Olmo of U.C. Davis is probably putting the final touches to his long-awaited study of the true origin and ancestry of California's unique wine. Some people fear that once this definitive study is made public, Zinfandel's reputation will begin to decline. To slip into the vernacular, “No way!”

The last word had it that Dr. Olmo was convinced that Zinfandel was descended from the Sangiovese grape of Tuscany. But this report which will certainly be comprehensive and authoritative will most likely be of academic interest to most of us. Zinfandel no longer needs the romantic stories and mysterious trappings to perpetuate itself. Besides, so many cuttings have been taken and transported to various parts of California over the last 100 years that the Zinfandel of today probably has very little in common with its true European ancestors. The unraveling of the myths and legends may in fact prove beneficial to this variety; once divested of this tired, stale promotional clutter, the wine may be allowed to show its abilities to perform within other small growing regions.

The irony of the research is even greater in Amador. Since the region's reputation has been staked so firmly on those old vines in the Shenandoah Valley and in Fiddletown, the news of Zinfandel's family tree will have little impact. As one Amador grower once told me, he couldn't say for sure that the grapes were really Zinfandel at all; he had merely taken at face value the previous owner's words that they were Zinfandel. And he added, “Besides, what difference does it make; the grapes make good wine, don't they?” He had me there, but then again, I'm partial to Amador wines. You'll have to try a few for yourself to see if they are for you.



Zinfandel

This Zinfandel was produced from 50 year old hillside vines grown near Fiddletown in Amador County. It has been aged in small and large American Oak since fermentation. The wine is bigger than the '73 Vintage and will continue to improve for several more years.

CARNEROS CREEK WINERY



Eschen Vineyards
Amador County

Zinfandel

Vintage 1974

Alcohol 14% by Volume
Produced and bottled by Carneros Creek Winery, Napa, California

ANGLIER'S CO. LTD.
FLUSHING, N. Y. 11356

SHOW-ALL
#290



76 Zinfandel, Fiddletown, bottled May 1978

The drought cut down the size of the crop on these old vines and we picked the grapes early to attempt the elegant claret style of the 1975. The grape tannin and the oak are quite evident but the fruit typical of the region comes through. This fine wine should be laid down for at least two years to show well and probably needs four or five years to develop fully.

PD (1/78)

RIDGE wine is made with an emphasis on quality and naturalness that is rarely attempted. Our grapes are grown in select vineyards (usually identified on the label), where they are left to ripen to peak maturity, often at some loss of quantity. We let the wine settle and age in small barrels, with only rare cellar treatment other than racking. Varieties are not blended unless so indicated on the label. Near Black Mountain on Monte Bello Ridge, our main vineyard is 10 miles south of Palo Alto, 15 miles inland from the ocean, and over 2000 feet in elevation. For requesting information on ordering wines or visiting the winery for tasting, please send us a note or call (408) 867-3233.

DRB (1967)

RIDGE CALIFORNIA ZINFANDEL FIDDLETOWN 1976

GRAPES FROM **ESCHEN RANCH**, SIERRA FOOTHILLS
AMADOR COUNTY ALCOHOL 12.1% BY VOLUME
PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS
17100 MONTE BELLO RD, CUPERTINO, CALIFORNIA



SANTINO

Special
Selection

1980

FIDDLETOWN

ZINFANDEL

Amador County

PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY SANTINO WINES
SHENANDOAH VALLEY, PLYMOUTH, CALIFORNIA
ALCOHOL 14% BY VOLUME

The Santino Winery is located in the Shenandoah Valley of Amador County, California. Amador County having warm days and cool Sierra Nevada Foothill nights produces some of California's finest Zinfandel wines.

This wine is 1980 Zinfandel, grown by Eschen Vineyards in Fiddletown, Amador County. Chester Eschen's 60 year old non-irrigated vineyard, is grown using the old fashioned head pruning method, which produces small yields of high quality Zinfandel. The wine was uniquely fermented by submerging the cap throughout fermentation and cellar aged in small French oak barrels. Due to the wines small production, we were able to carefully watch its development, thus being able to avoid fining or filtering the wine. Because of the low vineyard yield, we produced only a limited amount, this being bottle of 1,430 cases.

For more information about our wines, tastings and tours, please call or write us at the winery.
Scott Harvey
Winemaker

CALIFORNIA

Shenandoah
Vineyards



1979



AMADOR COUNTY
ZINFANDEL

PRODUCED & BOTTLED BY
SHENANDOAH VINEYARDS
PLYMOUTH, CALIFORNIA
ALCOHOL 15% BY VOLUME

1979 Zinfandel Special Reserve

During the 1979 harvest, a small lot of Zinfandel from the oldest vines of the Eschen vineyard distinguished itself with aroma and flavor of such intensity and uniqueness that it pleaded to be set aside. It was blended shortly after fermentation with several barrels of wine from the Dal Porto vineyard. This had an immense depth of fruit. The beautifully balanced marriage was aged in small French cooperage for 14 months. Although quite drinkable now, two to four years of further aging will reward the patient collector. The wine was bottled unfined and unfiltered. Some sediment should be expected.

Created by Rod Ruthel, one of California's contemporary and most versatile graphic designers, the label is the first in a series. It is affirmation of the close association between art and wine and a fitting tribute to this exceptional bottle of wine.