

BOOZEHOUNDZ

AUTHORITY, NOT ATTITUDE - Reviews of wines, spirits, beers, tasting rooms, bars and events.

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OH LORD, STUCK IN LODI, AGAIN: CINSAULT'S LONG ROAD

Thanks to Creedence Clearwater Revival, Lodi has suffered from an image problem. Lodi is not a fairytale wine destination; it's blue collar, a working ag town and there are over 80 wineries here, but a tremendous history. Lodi is one of the older wine regions in California. Best known for Zinfandel, Lodi is home to many own-rooted (meaning they have not been grafted on to other root systems) historic authentic "old vine" vineyards, like the Bechthold Vineyard planted to Cinsault in 1886. Ah, Cinsault. One of the coolest grapes most consumers don't know about. Often used a blender in Rhone wines this high-yielding, hot-weather red grape is half the genetic cross (along with Pinot Noir) behind Pinotage (which I adore) and it came to California in the 1860s. It typically holds flavors of plum, strawberry, raspberry and spice; it's bright with full round body and soft tannins.



The Bechthold Vineyard yields just 77 tons, about three tons per acre and it was named '2014 Vineyard of the Year' by the California State Fair. "It's a complete and utter sand pit," says Kevin Phillips who farms it. But many vines crave these kinds of porous soils: they don't hold water, they stress the vines, and they don't allow for phylloxera (the louse finds it difficult to migrate through sandy soils). So a recent tasting with four different versions of Cinsault all from this same historic vineyard shows just how remarkable a plot of land with vines on it can be. The Cinsault's I tasted were:

Onesta - has a spicy and earthy berry note, with minimal blueberry, some acidity.

Michael David - bright raspberry, strawberry and rhubarb, earthy with a nice spice.

Estate Crush – comprehensive lively strawberry and a balanced acidity.

Turley - a minimal, simplistic expression, my least favorite actually, basic bright strawberry compote but lacking much structure.