



Mike Dunne
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Dunne on Wine: White zinfandel revival grows in Lodi



Winemaker Michael McCay stands next to artwork by Alex Andrade of Modesto

“...
ZINFANDEL PRICED BETWEEN \$3 AND \$7, THE NICHE SEGMENTED, PLUNGED 236,000 CASES FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR

...same sort of precision he applies to his other wines, ...-old vineyard and fermenting the juice with wild yeasts.

...ing hues of cranberry and purple. The fragrant aroma and flavor runs to the raspberry and strawberry side of the coin, usually ample for the genre, but also unusually high in alcohol, which could be grounds for concern among the fraternity.

...afternoon white zinfandel to being an evening wine,

...wine. With the 2010 vintage he began to produce a wine from the southern Rhone Valley, an interpretation perhaps inspired by old-vine carignane and grenache, the coral

...same vineyard and the same 2014 harvest will rest in wood for two years before being bottled. The white zinfandel gives McCay a quicker return on his investment.

It wasn't long ago that McCay became interested in white zinfandel's history, which California wine historian Charles Sullivan traces to Lodi. There, writes Sullivan in "Zinfandel: A History of a Grape and Its Wine," George West of El Pinal Winery in 1869 what is believed to be the first white zinfandel.

Nevertheless, white zinfandel didn't become a staple of California's wine trade until 1973 when Sutter Home Winery in Napa Valley released a sweet interpretation. That wine helped lay the foundation for the tremendous growth of Trinchero Winery, Sutter Home's parent company, which recently built a mammoth winery in Lodi.

... Sutter Home still makes a lot of white zinfandel.

“The history of white zinfandel has come full circle. It began in Lodi more than a century ago, and that's where a potential revival of the wine is taking root, thanks to one gutsy vintner.”

...white zinfandel priced between \$3 and \$7, the niche segment, plunged 236,000 cases from the previous year, according to Fredrikson.

That kind of news didn't always bode well for the style popularized by Sutter Home, Turley Wine Cellars and Charles Anderson, which has a high residual sugar that makes it a crowd-pleaser.

In addition, McCay isn't alone. In the harvest he made just 70 cases of white zinfandel.

“My goal was to make something different. What is white zinfandel supposed to be? I don't know. I wanted to make it and to see where it went,” McCay says. “I wanted to have fun.”

He also wanted to acknowledge Lodi's underappreciated role in a bit of California wine history. “In 1869, the first white zinfandel was made in Lodi. That's heritage. I love history, so I said, ‘Let's go back to our roots here,’” McCay says.

No record of the style of the 1869 white zinfandel appears to exist, so McCay was on his own, and took his cues from the dry, light and crisp pink wines that have developed a following in recent years.

The result is a brilliant rosé... unusually ample for the genre, but also unusually spirited.

...drinking of spice and tasing tengu add up to a buoyantly

...wly released 2012 Equity (\$32), relatively light in color but multitudinous in flavor with its suggestions of blackberries, raspberries and plum.

...yard Zinfandel (\$32) kicks up the raspberry quotient a notch with notes of lavender and plum, while the 2011 TruLux (\$32) that McCay comes to traditional Lodi, given the wine's focus on raspberry fruit.

The most opulent of his zinfandels is the 2010 Contention, which at \$64 also is one of the pricier zins in the state.



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