

2010 PETER FRANUS BRANDLIN VINEYARD ZINFANDEL



Vineyards:	Brandlin Vineyard 100% Mount Veeder
Composition:	94% Zinfandel 6% Charbono, Mourvèdre, Carignane
Harvest Dates:	October 8 and 23, 2010
Fermentation:	14 days, up to 80°
Maceration:	10 days total before pressing
Oak aging:	21 months 100% French Oak 35% new "Burgundian Coopers"
Bottling Date:	September 10/ 2012
Production:	362 cases 750ml

As my mother used to say when I would take her up to Brandlin Vineyard, high in the hills of Mount Veeder, "this is as close to heaven as I am going to get." It's a magnificent and magical setting that ultimately finds its way into the wine. There are many well-made technically sound wines out in the marketplace, but few can capture the soul and personality offered by Brandlin. Since 1991 I have worked with this vineyard, and each vintage I can feel the energy and excitement because I know these are grapes that will never disappoint!

In the early 1920s, Henry Brandlin and sons Richard and Chester began planting vines on an eastern exposure hillside 1200 feet above the Napa Valley floor. Today these are probably the oldest vines on Mount Veeder, and they continue to produce intensely flavored grapes, growing for all these years without any irrigation other than the winter and spring rains. The vines are head-trained, independent of any trellis, and do not require much manipulation.

2010 was one of the most intriguing and unusual vintages in my 30-year career in Napa Valley. The coolest summer in decades was followed by scorching heat in August. As a result, some clusters shriveled and yields were down 10 to 15%. On the positive side, a cool, long growing season allowed great flavor development at lower sugars and wines that tend toward more elegance. But unfortunately crop levels were very low.

Our goal is always the same with Brandlin. We want the character to shine through, so our winemaking is never heavy-handed. By keeping fermentation temperatures slightly lower than those for Bordeaux reds, we maintain the vibrant character of Zinfandel, and by selecting Burgundian French oak barrels we add complexity as well as refinement to the wine.

As for the 2010, it exhibits a brilliant dark ruby youthful hue. Classic aromas of strawberry, cinnamon, bay, mineral and earth become much more revealing in the mouth—accentuated by vanilla and toasty oak overtones. The wine is very bright with soft tannins and lively acidity that wake up the palate and suggest plenty of life ahead of it.

Coincidentally, we happened to open a 2001 Brandlin tonight and recognized the common theme. A unique wine that gives pleasure today, but will also reward many years from now.