

2009 PETER FRANUS BRANDLIN VINEYARD ZINFANDEL



Vineyard:	Brandlin Vineyard 100% Mount Veeder
Composition:	92% Zinfandel 8% Charbono, Mourvèdre, Carignane
Harvest Date:	October 8, 2009
Fermentation:	12 days, peak temperature 80°
Maceration:	14 days total before pressing
Oak aging:	17 months 100% French Oak 35% new "Burgundian Coopers"
Bottling Date:	April 5, 2011
Production:	816 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 where you can truly feel the energy 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.

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 without lots of vineyard manipulation, they perform every year. I have worked with this vineyard since 1991, and it is impossible to point to a "weak" vintage.

2009 will be discussed and evaluated in two ways—before the rains and after the rains. It was a beautiful, mild, growing season with slow, great flavor development in the grapes. Everything before the rains arguably is equal to anything of this decade. Fortunately, we lucked out on the pre-rain side.

As for the wine. Fermentation temperatures were kept slightly lower than those for Bordeaux reds to accentuate the zesty and forward fruit character of Zinfandel. Aging exclusively in Burgundian French oak barrels added complexity as well as refinement to the wine. Dark ruby in color, the classic Brandlin aromas identify the unique character of the vineyard--crushed stone, bright berry notes, lavender, white pepper, clove, ginger, anise, bay and a touch of earthiness. The 2009 is a little less "weighty" than the 2008, making it perhaps a little more refreshing. For those somewhat apprehensive about Zinfandel, our style typically surprises.

In case you missed it, our 2008 Brandlin ranked "best Zin of the year" in *Wine & Spirits*, in a field of over 200 wines. We'll see how the 2009 performs.