



PETER FRANUS  
BRANDLIN VINEYARD  
Mt. VEEDER ZINFANDEL  
2002

VINEYARD: Brandlin Vineyard (Mt. Veeder)

COMPOSITION: 95% Zinfandel; 5% Charbono, Mourvèdre, Carignane

HARVEST DATE: September 30, 2002

FERMENTATION: 11 days, up to 87°

MACERATION: 16 days

OAK AGING: 15 months, 100% French Oak, 40% new, "Burgundian" Coopers

BOTTLING DATE: April 5, 2004

PRODUCTION: 400 cases - 750ml

This is my twelfth vintage of Brandlin Zinfandel, and if cult following refers to any of my wines, this is it. I guarantee that I will be repeating myself, but the story of this special vineyard deserves repeating. In the early 1920s, Henry Brandlin and sons Richard and Chester began planting vines on an eastern exposure hillside overlooking Napa Valley. Today these are probably the oldest vines on Mount Veeder, and they continue to produce flavor-packed, unique 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 give a glimpse into the good old days of grape-growing when they actually did cultivate the land with a mule-drawn plow.

I don't care what the vintage is, there has never been an average wine from Brandlin, and I think that offers insight into what a great vineyard is all about. There may be variations in style from year to year, but there is always that distinctive Brandlin terroir of crushed gravel, allspice, cinnamon, truffle, and blackberry that lead to a depth of flavor uncommon in Zinfandel. The wines are typically brooding, and although you can gulp this wine early, a little patience will definitely reward you. I recently did a winemaker dinner where we poured the '94 Brandlin. What a gratifying moment.

2002 was a rather uneventful mild growing season without too many extremes. The grapes appeared to enjoy those conditions, ripening uniformly with excellent color and flavor development. Eyes opened wide as people would taste this wine out of barrel. In bottle, the dark ruby color invites you in to discover the heady, perfumed layers of berry, vanilla, anise and spice. It's a mouthful all right, but another hallmark of Brandlin is the way it manages fat Zinfandel fruit by adding some grip and angularity to the wine. Both nose and flavors merge in a relentless finish.

I have often said, Brandlin is a unique wine that separates itself from the ocean of Zinfandels out there. It will never be lost in the pack.