

2006 PETER FRANUS BRANDLIN VINEYARD ZINFANDEL



Vineyards:	Brandlin Vineyard 100% Mount Veeder
Composition:	92% Zinfandel 8% Charbono, Mourvèdre, Carignane
Harvest Date:	October 16, 2006
Fermentation:	12 days, peak temperature 82°
Maceration:	21 days total before pressing
Oak aging:	16 months 100% French Oak 40% new "Burgundian Coopers"
Bottling Date:	March 21, 2008
Production:	1000 cases 750ml

I have had the privilege to work with the magnificent Brandlin Vineyard since 1991. The picturesque head-trained vines—65 to 85 years old—are not irrigated and face the east about 1200 feet above Napa Valley. The vineyard is amazingly consistent, and each year I wonder what kind of wine it will offer me, reflecting all the variables and idiosyncrasies of the growing season. I treasure my walks through the vineyard with Chester Brandlin as I imagine the history that the vines have witnessed during all these decades.

Except for a ten day heat wave in July, 2006 was a long, relatively cool, growing season that started late and extended well into October, with harvest occurring two weeks later than the previous vintage. The wines display good acidity and firmer tannins than 2005, resulting in a generally more angular structure—perhaps more "classical?"

Last night as I went shopping for dinner, I pulled out my grocery list written on the back of an old Franus label—the 1991 "Late Pick" Zinfandel. I had to smile because the numbers on the label that signified a dessert wine in those days is now the norm for many Zins paraded as table wines today. The 2005 Brandlin flirted with those upper limits but not this elegant 2006 that has a degree less alcohol, and is arguably a more likely candidate to enjoy with your dinner.

Medium ruby in color, the aromas offer blueberry, allspice, and black cherry notes, made more complex by that Brandlin terroir of mineral and earth. Toasty French oak integrates and elevates the nose, while enhancing the structure and tannin profile of the wine. This is a vibrant, lively, and refreshing wine that invites another glass, and perhaps even a third!

The 2006 stylistically reminds me of both the 1997 and 2001 vintages. Both are still aging beautifully, an attribute that I predict will hold true for this latest release--#16 in the series.