

2004 PETER FRANUS BRANDLIN VINEYARD ZINFANDEL



Vineyards: Brandlin Vineyard - 100% Mount Veeder
Composition: 95% Zinfandel, 5% Charbono, Mourvèdre, Carignane
Harvest Date: September 17, 2004
Fermentation: 84°
Maceration: 24 days
Oak aging: 17 months 100% French Oak 40% new "Burgundian Coopers"
Bottling Date: April 13, 2006
Production: 991 cases 750ml

I have had the privilege to work with the magnificent Brandlin Vineyard since 1991. The picturesque head-trained vines—60 to 80 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 endured for all these decades. The magic of the place most definitely finds its way into the wine.

For those new to Brandlin, I need to repeat a little history. 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 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.

Harvest began early in 2004, with a smaller than average crop. Is it coincidence that wines from the "even years" seem to be rounder and fatter while those from the odd are more angular and firmer? Such is the case with 04, more akin in mouth-feel to the enormously popular 2002 Brandlin.

Whenever I write these fact sheets, my ritual requires that I open a bottle of the wine. With Brandlin in particular, I invariably think, what pleasure in a glass. A brilliant dark ruby hue introduces you to the distinctive mineral, bay, allspice, cinnamon, and blackberry nose. Thick buttered toast with plenty of blackberry preserves. I also suggest you get out the stopwatch for the lengthy finish on this one. There is still an amazing youthful exuberance and liveliness in a wine nearly two and a half years old.

This is my fourteenth vintage of Brandlin Zin. What they each have in common is their ability to excite and intrigue. This is not your ordinary Zinfandel.