

2011 PETER FRANUS BRANDLIN VINEYARD ZINFANDEL



Vineyards:	Brandlin Vineyard 100% Mount Veeder
Composition:	92% Zinfandel 8% Charbono, Mourvèdre, Carignane
Harvest Date:	October 15, 2011
Fermentation:	15 days, peak temperature 84°
Maceration:	14 days total before pressing
Oak aging:	17 months 100% French Oak 40% new "Burgundian Coopers"
Bottling Date:	April 9, 2013
Production:	630 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—they look like little trees--independent of any trellis to support them. I have worked with the vineyard for over 20 years, and even in challenging vintages, they always manage to produce delicious wines.

2011 was a complicated vintage. A cool wet spring diminished crop levels in many vineyards and late spring rains further delayed the growing season. Overall, summer was relatively cool with few heat spikes. On the plus side, cool conditions allowed wonderful flavor development with good ripeness achieved at lower sugar levels. We began harvest on October 15, definitely on the late side. Once again, crop levels were lower than normal, but up a little from 2010.

We ferment our Zinfandels at temperatures slightly lower than those for Bordeaux reds to accentuate the zesty and forward fruit character of the variety. Aging exclusively in Burgundian French oak barrels adds complexity as well as refinement to the wine. As for the wine. Medium dark ruby, the aromas quickly emerge identifying the character that is unique to Brandlin Zinfandel--red raspberry, rose petal, white pepper, clove, ginger, and anise. Aromas lead to a supple mouth of black cherry and plum with a wonderful balance of tannin and acidity. Just right! I call the 2011 gentle and friendly—a wonderful example of a wine with length and complexity that ultimately seduces you, rather than knocking you over the head.

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. In case anyone is counting, this is my 21st vintage in a row from this special property.