



INTENSE RED FEBRUARY WINE CLUB



Felta Creek Vineyard Zinfandel

Sonoma 2009 \$24.99

This is a second label from De La Montanya Winery outside of Healdsburg straddling the Dry Creek and Russian River Valleys. Old school California farming family that amassed a hefty chunk of vineyard in 4 different North Coast AVA's, the youngest generation, Dennis and his wife Tina launched the winemaking component in '95 and opened the winery in 2003. They hired my old buddy and raconteur Mike Loykasek as the original winemaker, but he just consults these days for them, busy with his Dark Horse and Gunslinger labels. Interestingly, Felta Creek – the actual creek, is undergoing watershed restoration to protect the Steelhead and Coho Salmon runs in cooperation with Fish Friendly Farming, an organization that assists vineyards in proper sustainable farming and vineyard practices to protect the riparian corridors.

For instance, the Felta Creek project is concerned with removing the non-native plants along the corridor, primarily the blue periwinkle and Himalayan Blackberry that essentially kill off the native trees that protect the banks from collapsing into the creek and creating silt problems as well as destroying shady holding areas for baby steelhead trout. This is all funded by the State of California and as a witness (referring to my story about seeing Salmon in Calistoga) – it is working. This Zinfandel, sourced from the Estate vineyard in Dry Creek Valley tastes very correct for its terrior. Big, Spicy, well balanced, and delicious. Dark in the glass and possessing aromas of cherry, blackberry, clove, and black pepper. The palate shows off more red fruits like cranberry, pomegranate, and black cherry at first, then leads into spices like clove, anise, black pepper, and cinnamon. The finish has a briary, woody note initially then gushes off into the distance with cherry and tobacco notes. Perfect with BBQ Ribs with a spicy sauce.

Vitaluce Syrah

Paso Robles 2005 \$23.99

By far, the stand-outs for Syrah last year at the Hospice du Rhone tasting in Paso Robles were Denner and Halter Ranch wines, or labels that sourced fruit from those 2 vineyards. Well, this wine has fruit from BOTH, and watch out baby, better fasten your seatbelts. Super inky, thick, extracted, and concentrated. Violets, pencil lead, smoke, roasted meat, and blackberry pie on the nose. Mineral, blueberry, leather, char, tobacco, cedar, thyme, and dark chocolate on the palate. Super long extracted finish that lasts forever. This wine needs bold flavors to pair it with like smoked Texas Brisket or Grilled Sausages.

Eno Wines Syrah

Carneros Sonoma 2008 \$24.99

This winery was introduced to me by John Matthew Green, my right hand man at the Garage. He somehow knows Sasha Verhage, the winemaker and proprietor of Eno, and we have had his delicious Grenache in the Club last year. His day job is Design Lead at Google and he makes the wine in a warehouse in Berkeley. The grapes that went into this wine come from Las Madres vineyard, one of the best Syrah vineyards around. Thomas Brown, super star winemaker from Shrader and Outpost states, "Las Madres is becoming the To Kalon of Syrah". To Kalon is the Cabernet vineyard in Oakville that sold a few years ago at \$250k per acre, and where Thomas sourced his 100 point Shrader Cab.

Nestled in a bowl and aligned east – west, the fruit gets tons of sun, but cools down significantly at night – sometimes a 35 degree swing. Carneros is the closest AVA to the SF Bay. Very dark and aromatic, this wine gives off notes of huckleberry, lavender, sage, licorice, and wet slate. The palate brings up dark chocolate covered cherries, wild game, blueberry, fig, black olive, and white pepper. Long extended finish with hints of smoky oak, lilac, and blackberry. Have with long braised Lamb shank, Pot Roast, or strong cheese.

Grace Patriot Tempranillo

El Dorado County 2005 \$22.99

Steve Grace is a plastic surgeon in Reno, Nevada. He purchased the historic Irving Ranch outside of Placerville, where grapes have been farmed since the 1930's. The property went into major disrepair and was purchased by the Grace Family in 2000. Extensive clean-up and renovation took place and now Steve farms some pretty awesome fruit. Named for his great great grandfather, Lewis Grace, who served in the 4th Virginia Regiment during the Revolutionary War and was killed in action in 1780. The Grace family sent five family members to that war.

This wine is from the very first vintage of the newly restored Irving Ranch. Tempranillo – the famous grape of Rioja in Spain, does really well in the high mountains of the Sierra with the hot days and cool nights. Blended with a little Cabernet and Graciano, this wine is full bodied and fruity yet has structured acidity and tannin that bode well to food pairing. Aromas of raspberry, cherry, and rose petal leads into cranberry, ripe plum, cigar box, moss, and black tea. The finish is well balanced with a hint of black olive. Try it with authentic Paella that uses rabbit and chicken – no shellfish.

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Sexual Chocolate

California 2010 \$21.99

Cool label, huh? Love the juju of these dudes from SLO, who were making wine while they were in school at Cal Poly. As they say: "from the guys who brought your daughter home late", this wine is a blend of Old Vine Zinfandel from Howell Mt. and Syrah grown in Santa Barbara Co. Very full bodied, the nose has hints of cherry, mocha, and sweet oak. The flavors of cherry pie, espresso bean, roasted herb, cranberry, bitter chocolate, and black pepper lead into a rich, lush finish with soft tannin. I had this fun wine with a Tri-Tip sandwich from Buster's across the street with loads of spicy BBQ sauce.

Stone House Zinfandel

North Coast 2009 \$19.99

This Zin is sourced from several Old Vine vineyards in Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. Brought to by Negotiant Extraordinaire, Tim Parsley, who confounds me again and again on the delicious juice he sources on a continual basis it seems. He is turning into a master blender, for sure. Ripe, rich, and very easy drinking Zin, I sucked down a bottle in no time at all, I was amazed how quick it went down. Flavors of huckleberry, boysenberry, coffee, black pepper, and baking spice. Smooth fruity finish with soft tannin. Great wine with lighter meat dishes like Pork Roast, or Smoked Chicken.