



2015 IL CILIEGIO

THE STAMPEDE VINEYARD

This wine is composed of 100% ZINFANDEL from the Stampede Vineyard, adjacent to the rodeo grounds in Clements, California—in the warm, dry, northeast corner of Lodi. The soil here is light sand washed down from the Sierras millions of years ago. The growing conditions are very different from the loamy soils of central and western Lodi. The vineyard was planted in the early

1900s and most of it was replanted in the 1940s. This wine is from the younger vines—but still more than 70 years old. All of the vines are planted on their own roots and have been farmed without irrigation for their whole lives.

The idea for the wine came to Assistant Winemaker Alex Pitts on a visit to the Emidio Pepe vineyards and winery in Abruzzo. There he tasted a Cerasuolo made as a very light red wine from the dark red Montepulciano d'Abruzzo grapes. It occurred to him that one could make a similar wine in Northern California from old-vine zinfandel, and so he and I—and Chiara Pepe from the winery in Italy—put our head together and came up with the following protocol:

Foot-tread the whole clusters without destemming. We foot tread relatively briefly and leave some of the fruit whole.

Macerate the juice and fruit together for 24 hours.

After maceration, press gently as for making white wine. Discard pomace and ferment the red juice in neutral oak barrels. Inhibit malo-lactic fermentation to preserve acidity and emphasize freshness. Age for 5 months, then filter and bottle. Simple and direct.

The resulting wine is bright red in color, but much more like a white wine in body, texture, and acidity. It is medium in body, totally dry, and much more savory than fruity. A complete success and an honorable homage to Cerasuolo.

A note on the name: it did not seem fair to call this emulation a Cerasuolo, so we used a related word. A Cerasuolo is a cherry-colored wine; we called this "The Cherry Tree."

TOTAL PRODUCTION:

about 200 cases