



2015 STAMPEDE

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 older and oldest vines. All of the vines are planted on their own roots and have been farmed without irrigation for their whole lives.

We makes this in a very simple way, determined to catch the straightforward charm but also the strangeness of Zinfandel. The fruit always ripens unevenly— which is part of the charm of working with this grape, especially from older vines.

There was a time when I thought that the right way to make red wine from old-vine zinfandel was to go for power and concentration— as if there was some correlation between vine-age and intensity, concentration. Several of us have learned in the last few years of working in very classical ways with old vines that the wonderful gift of the vines is not concentration, but delicacy and finesse. Quiet power. This wine is a perfect example of that. We all agree that the best way to time the harvest of the fruit it to work WITH it— not against it. For this reason, we do not let the clusters hang and hang until every grape is deep, dark purple. Instead, we pick the vineyard in the middle of general ripeness, preserving the freshness and the verve of the fruit— and securing interesting herbal flavors that interpenetrate the light but complex fruit.

We make this wine in the simplest possible way: we bring the fruit in from the vineyard, introduce it gradually into 600 liter puncheons turned vertical, with their heads removed. We stomp some of the fruit as it goes in, releasing some of the juice. Then we leave it alone. In a week or so, fermentation starts and a cap forms. Still we leave it alone. We call this the Courier Protocol— an extended floating cap fermentation with a minimum of punchdowns and no pumpovers. After about 3 weeks of fermentation, we drained the wine away, pressed the remaining pomace very gently, and aged the free-run separately for about a year, in two 220 liter neutral oak barrels.

The wine aged without SO₂ and was bottled with 0 free and about 40 mg/L total.

TOTAL PRODUCTION:
about 50 cases