July 16, 1993

A Story of an Old Vineyard Continues

Once again, it is time for an update on the Zinfandels of Fred Scherrer & Family.

In last years' mailing I described the history of my family's Zinfandel vineyard, and the style of wine we are making from it. Last summer, we offered futures on the 1991 Zin and the response was fantastic. The wine was bottled without filtration in November, 1992. After much deliberation, we decided on a European flavor of label, putting the type of grape, vintage, and origin as the most prominent parts of the label. In April, the wine was released and delivered to our futures customers, restaurants, and some wine shops. We really appreciate all the telephone calls & letters telling us how much everyone likes the wine. The most common question was: "are we going to do it again?" Yes.

In 1992 we made as similar amount of Zinfandel from the same block of old vineyard planted by my Grandfather in the 1910's. We are offering a limited amount of it on a futures basis for $110 per case until August 31, 1993, unless we run out of our futures allocation first. Like last year, we will hold a barrel tasting at the Dehlinger Winery, 6300 Guerneville Road, Sebastopol CA, on **August 7 & 8 1993, from 10-5**. You will be able to taste the 1992 vintage for yourselves to see how the wine works with a few different barrel types, and talk with us about things. The 1992 Zin will be released in April, 1994 @ a retail price of $14 per bottle.

It appears that many winemaking techniques used for Pinot noir and Rhone wines are appropriate for Zinfandel. For example, we increased the proportion of whole, uncrushed clusters (stems & all) from 5% in the 1991 fermentation, to 10% in 1992. This makes the 1992 Zin a little more spicy than the 1991, yet still has those delicious creamy berry flavors in the mouth which seem to be typical for this vineyard. Imagine a Châteaunuef-du-Pape with a sweet berry structure. It's quite exciting for us to try different techniques with this wonderful vineyard's grapes. Years from now, we will all be pulling corks on these first vintages comparing notes as to how they develop. Like the 1991, no filtration is planned for this wine as we prefer to keep *all* the wine *in* the wine.

We enjoy making wine for people who know what they like. Those of you who liked the 1991 Zin are in good company. Robert Parker gave the wine a very favorable review (90 points) in the June, 1993 Wine Advocate. To those of you who purchased the 1991 Zin based on your own impressions, we give you a 98+.

While tasting grapes through the family vineyards during the last couple of years, I have been impressed by the 20-year old Zinfandel vines grown near the old block. "Old clone", same rootstock, same soils... I suppose they should also make pretty good wine if yields are kept moderate and careful hand work on the vines is done. (It seems to me that I have heard this before. Perhaps those of you who talked to Ed, my dad, at last year's barrel tasting probably heard him saying the same thing. Isn't it remarkable how, as time passes, your parents seem to get smarter?) Maybe someday we will make a wine from these too...

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After many hours of "suggestion" I finally convinced my Father to put a rootstock trial in the new block of vineyard planted this spring. Our family's success with the "rupestris St. George" rootstock (resistant to phylloxera) is difficult to walk away from, but there may be something better suited to the soils & climate that we haven't tried yet.

I began scrounging around for rootstock prunings last winter for the trial and was able to find a couple of commercial nurseries who would actually talk to a small-time customer. I ordered everything I could find from every nursery I knew. Soon, our refrigerator became packed with dormant prunings of many unusual rootstocks. Finally my wife Judi persuaded me to start up an old refrigerator we had in the garage and put my sticks in there (dinner prevails over research). Fiddling around with bench-grafting to test the compatibility between fruiting variety & rootstock was fun, but getting the rootstocks to callus & root in time for my Father's spring planting was serious business. The race was on. Fortunately, the wet spring bought me some time. Later, a past co-worker of mine was able to get most of the rootstocks I needed as 1 year-old dormant plants. This reduced the importance of my efforts in propagation, and left me with my own baby vines growing in milk cartons in the yard. I can't bear to throw them out. Maybe it's time for a rootstock trial in our south Sebastopol garden?

The 1993 growing season got off to a wet start this spring as you know. By the end of May, we were wondering if there would even *be* a 1993 vintage. Fortunately, the blooming flower clusters did well despite all the rain. Zinfandel tolerates cold & rainy weather at bloomtime much better than more sensitive varieties like Merlot. This means a good grape berry set, and a reasonable crop, yet with some tiny berries. This in turn means, that if it is a reasonably dry harvest, 1993 should prove to be a nice, concentrated vintage for us.

There have been some new developments in the last year. We were able to license the delivery of our futures at Dehlinger Winery, where we made the wine. You will be able to pick up your futures purchases at Dehlinger, so shipping is now optional. Since our "warehouse" space at Dehlinger is limited, any 1992 Zin futures that are not shipped, should be picked up by August, 1994. There are also some new states to which UPS will ship wine. The states for UPS shipment are: CA, CO, ID, IL, OR, NM, MO, WA & WI. Airfreight to other states is still available.

For those of you who are new to our mailing list, reprints of the vineyard history are available. Please contact us and we will be happy to send it to you. If you missed out on our 1991 Zin, and would like to try some, please call (707) 823-8980 and leave a message so we can get back to you with information regarding retailers who might still have some on their shelves.