

— R O B E R T —
BIALE
V I N E Y A R D S

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2018 First Grade

Napa Valley Reserve Zinfandel

Cream of the crop, tops of its class. Winemaker, Tres Goetting, carefully selects the top clusters from the vineyards at the winery along with a selection from Aldo's Vineyard and the Stagecoach Vineyard®. This is the third vintage of the FIRST GRADE reserve Zinfandel and it has proven itself to push Zinfandel to new heights with a wine of power, balance, and refinement.

Vintage Notes: Seamless season of heavenly hangtime and phenomenal phenolic development. February saw abundant rains, followed by lots of filtered light in spring and early summer. Both bud break and flowering occurred a bit late, but under ideal weather conditions, creating plentiful and even fruit set. Summer brought generous sun during the day and cooler marine influences, virtually uninterrupted by major heat spikes. The relatively mild summer followed by extended fall sunshine and moderate heat created near-ideal conditions for winemakers to allow their fruit to accumulate flavor complexity with gradual increases in sugar levels. Volume is looking great, up 20-30% increase over average crop quantity.

Harvest Dates: 9-4-18 to 9-21-18

Winemaking: Our winemaking begins in the vineyard with meticulous attention to detail and close monitoring by Bob Biale and winemaker Tres Goetting. The winemaking philosophy is to grow our wines concentrating our efforts all season long in the vineyard so that when the fruit arrives into the cellar, only minimalistic vinification is needed. We want the wines to speak of the soils from which they were grown.

At harvest, the fruit was hand-picked and hand sorted to ensure that only the best fruit makes it into the fermenter. The grapes were then crushed and gravity fed into open top tanks. The must was cold soaked for 2 to 4 days at 50°F. We then inoculated the must with commercial yeast strains. For color and tannin extraction, we did 2 to 3 punch downs per day. Fermentation was complete after 15 days at a maximum temperature of 86°F. At dryness, we lightly pressed to 100% Burgundy oak barrels of which 50% are new. Malolactic fermentation was completed in the barrels. The wine was aged in barrels for 16 months.

Alcohol: 14.8%

Winemaker's Tasting Notes: The 2018 First Grade wine is our third release of this special winemaker's cuvee. It is a highly focused wine that is crafted specially and uniquely for each vintage. The base blend stood out from the beginning at fermentation and was culled from three Oak Knoll District Biale estate vineyard blocks of Zinfandel. The final blend was finished with touches of Grenache, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Carignane and Early Burgundy. The wine is aged for 16 months in 100% French oak Burgundy barrels (50% new). Aromas and flavors of blackberry, raspberry preserves, violets, fig, vanilla wafer, cinnamon and dried flowers. Balance and refinement are achieved with a burst of Zinfandel essence and vineyard expression. Made for the ages, this wine is expected to cellar for 10 years or more. Only 120 cases produced.