



## Tres Sabores

### 2005 Zinfandel

The Rutherford Bench, classic 'Cabernet Country' also turns out to be a pretty splendid place to grow and make Zinfandel. That's our conclusion after nine vintages of the Tres Sabores project: to find out if grapes that had been part of multiple-vineyard Zin blends in the past could make a distinguished, single vineyard wine. Planted by an Air Force Veteran in the early 70's, the vineyard became our "front yard" when we moved here in 1987. Since 1999, Tres Sabores has sought to illuminate the 'three savory tastes' in every bottle of wine: the vibrant taste of the vine supported by the taste of the terroir and also complemented by the winemaker's personal taste and timing. Zin just happens to be a particularly vibrant and delightfully impressionable varietal, capable of taking up the respective contributions of place and artisan style and in a particularly refreshing way.

So indeed, from 1999 through 2004, I asked three winemakers: Karen Culler, Rudy Zuidema, and Ken Bernards (replaced by Ashley Heisey in 2002) to join me in a project to discover the true taste of 'this' Rutherford terroir. Each winemaker was given carte blanche to make their own wine from a third of the vineyard—to craft their individual interpretation of what to my mind is one of the most savory and sensual of varietals. For several vintages, I kept the exploration going; we bottled three distinctive winemaker cuvees. Then, prior to bottling the 2003 I decided to bring the project full circle at last. We all sat down together and over the course of several tastings of the three individual cuvees, created one wine reflecting everything we had learned about how the vineyard might express its particular character, taste, and personality. For the 2004 Vintage I joined Rudy and Ashley as a winemaker and we repeated the cuvee-blend tastings again

The 2005 Rutherford, (made solely by yours, truly) shines with all of the sumptuous, berry-forward aromas and spicy, black pepper flavors one would hope for in a Zinfandel. Yet it reflects its elegant Rutherford pedigree and is easily persuaded to take a supporting role on the table when asked to. Harvests were concentrated in the three weeks beginning on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Dry farmed and yielding between ½ and two tons per acre, berry sugars averaged between 24.8 and 26.5 brix. Small but significant technical differences characterized the winemaking as lots were cold-macerated for from three to as long as seven days, average fermentation temperatures ranged from 76°F to 88°F, a few lots were allowed to ferment spontaneously (a process this vineyard loves). All wines were aged for 15 months in approximately 50% new oak—largely French with a handful of American—(Rudy's favorite for his cuvee in particular).

#### **Quick notes:**

**What:** Rutherford Bench estate Zinfandel from 35 year-old, certified organic vines. Very low yield

**What we like about the wine:** Great balance, fruit forward, nice texture

Spicy black and white pepper

Smoky black cherry, Blackberry, & Blueberry

Stylish and elegant (that's the Rutherford Bench)

Julie Johnson, Owner & Winemaker

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