

J. Rickards Vineyards' Old Vines Reach Century Mark

Old Vine Zinfandel grapes at J. Rickards Vineyards & Winery reached the ripe old age of 100 this year. Planted in 1908 by the Brignoli family, members of the Italian-Swiss Colony cooperative in nearby Asti, the Zinfandel vineyard includes other wine varieties in its "field blend."

"We have about 80% Zinfandel vines, and the rest is made up of varying numbers of Petite Sirah, Carignane, Alicante Bouchet, Mataro, and even some white varieties, Palomino and Muscat Canelli," explains Jim Rickards, who has owned the 60-acre property since 1976.

"The four-acre block is on rocky hillside and was originally farmed with horses in the early 1900s and we find lost horseshoes and tack to this day. It is truly like walking through history while in the vineyard," Rickards continued.

In addition to restoring the Old Vine Zin, over the years Rickards himself planted blocks of Petite Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Malbec and Zinfandel that has been grafted from clones from his vineyard as well as several other turn-of-the-last-century vineyards.

"We call it the Ancestor Zinfandel, and it includes cuttings taken from the old Zinfandel vines originally belonging to the families Pastori, Brignoli, Nervo, Vasconi, Mazzoni, Pachetti and Osborn – sounds like an Italian law firm," Rickards joked.

Jim and his wife Eliza have been making wine since 1991, and in 2004 started production of their own brand at J. Rickards Winery. The 2005 vintage, numbering just over 500 cases, was



Saturday, August 30 - Old Vine Zinfandel Tours at J. Rickards Winery
Enjoy complementary tastings & a private tour with the winemaker through the 100-year-old Zinfandel vineyard
11am-5pm, www.jrwinery.com, 707-758-3441

recently released.

"2005 was a great time to start the winery, as the harvest was both quality and quantity," said Rickards. "We make Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Sauvignon Blanc and a Cabernet blend we call 'Sisters', which has Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petite Verdot, all estate grown."

When Rickards started renovating the old Zinfandel vines in 1976, he thought they might be lost to the ages. However, careful sustainable farming practices helped pull them through, yielding more than eight tons last year.

"It's an honor and a privilege to have been able to farm these historic vines for the past 32 years. And it will be wonderful to make wine from them as long as they allow."

J. Rickards Vineyards & Winery are owned and operated by Jim and Eliza Rickards in northern Alexander Valley. They grow wine grapes on 45 acres of their property and sell to renowned wineries in the area. In addition, they make a limited number of cases of hand-crafted wines, which are available for purchase by appointment at the tasting room, located at the winery, 24505 Chianti Road, Cloverdale, about 2 miles north of Geyserville. To make an appointment, call the winery at (707) 758-3441.

For more information contact: Annie Holman, (707) 773-3336 or Annie@jrwinery.com.

PREFERRED GEYSERVILLE WINERIES

Map showing wineries: ROSSO & BIANCO, MAZZOCCO, and the Russian River. Roads shown include 101, 123, and 107.

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Map showing wineries: ARTISTE KENDAL JACKSON, GALLO OF SONOMA PLAZA, and TOPEL. Streets shown include Healdsburg Ave, Center St, and others.