

## 2001 STEELE CATFISH VINEYARD ZINFANDEL [ California ]



### Vineyards

The vineyard is located on the Bell Hill bench of Lake County just south of Kelseyville. Catfish Vineyard, planted in 1901, is head pruned and stands on its own roots. Steele Wines purchased the vineyard in 2000 and we have been working to rehabilitate the old vines since that time. We have pruned the vines back so that each vine has fewer shoots and therefore fewer grape bunches and we have planted new vines where the 100-year-old vines have expired. A vintage consuming process but well worth the effort. Catfish Vineyard Zinfandel, is actually a field blend of a number of varieties, including small amounts of Carignan, Alicante Bouche, Cabernet, and several other varieties - even some white grapes.

### Food Pairing

Because of the well-drained volcanic soil and wide variety of grapes in the field blend, Catfish does not frequently exhibit typical warm-climate old-vine Zinfandel characteristics. It tends toward a more bramble berry palate. 2001 is a delicious vintage for Catfish. The nose reveals ripe jammy fruit, candied cherry, and brown sugar. The wine has medium tannins that will allow it to age for a number of years or be consumed now. The wine provides a mouth full of tart red fruit, and many layers of jam, coffee, and tar along with good structure and balance. Enjoy this wine by itself with a fire crackling on the hearth.

### Pitxun - French Basque aka - P'tit Basque

This semi-soft sheep's milk cheese is handmade in the French Pyrenees. The Pyrenees Mountain range, a natural border that divides France and Spain, is populated by the Basques, a people who have their own customs and language. Although the Basques live on both sides of the border, they produce this cheese on the French side. Amidst the breath taking, rolling mountains of the Pyrenees, vast pastures stretch as far as the eye can see, providing fertile grazing for milk-producing sheep. P'tit Basque, made from pure sheep's milk, has a rather dry texture and an earthy, nutty flavor. It comes to us in a whole, uncut cylinder, offering a beautiful presentation as well as a lovely taste.



### Vintage

The vintage of 2001 produced fruit of excellent quality. A great way to start the new millennium. In May we installed drip irrigation at Catfish, the first step toward revitalizing the vineyard. It will take a few vintages to reap the full benefits of this addition, but even in 2001 we were able to have longer hang time than in previous vintages and thus develop more complexity in the Catfish Zin. We experienced a moderate spring and summer and a slightly larger crop than in previous years, historically the vineyard has produced less than one ton per acre.