

2000 Steele Zinfandel DuPratt Vineyard Mendocino Ridge



Vintage

While possibly not as good as the 1999 vintage the vintage of 2000 still produced wines of elegance and finesse. Not big heavy wines but wines that can be enjoyed early and often.

Vineyards

Even in a good year, picking the DuPratt is never easy. A mountain vineyard with hilly terrain gives some vines more sun. By its nature Zinfandel ripens unevenly and each cluster has raisins, ripe berries and under-ripe berries. Choosing when to harvest takes skill, intuition and sometimes, good luck. Our answer to this is a test pick in which we harvest two rows, which run the length of the vineyard. If we get what we feel are adequate sugars after a day of soaking on the skins, we then harvest the remainder of the vineyard. Even so we keep the upper (riper) part of this vineyard separate from the lower portion.

Winemaking

This tiny 5.5 acre plot of 80 year old vines has always produced wines of spectacular quality. The long season enjoyed by grapes grown in the Mendocino Ridge appellation does allow full ripeness and consistent quality year in and year out. Aging for 16 months in a special mix of Tarnasaud French oak barrels is the other key to the great flavors and drinking pleasure that is a hallmark of the DuPratt Zinfandel. The long season and elevation makes wines that are rich, elegant and complex. They are more like fine Claret than typical old vine Zinfandel from California.

Mature Coolea



This cow's milk cheese is made by the Willems family in the Irish hills of County Cork. Dick and Helene Willems, a married couple of Dutch descent, began their adventure in cheesemaking when they quit the restaurant business and toured Europe in search of a more peaceful place to live. After brief stints in France and Spain, the family settled down on a farm near the inland town of Coolea in Cork. Not wanting to return to the restaurant business, the couple needed to find a new line of work. Given the excellent grazing conditions on their farm, they inevitably turned to cheesemaking. Owing to their Dutch heritage, they decided to make an Irish version of Gouda. The presence of wild Irish herbs in the grazing fields gives Coolea a richer, fruitier flavor than Dutch Gouda. Mature Coolea, which is aged for over 6 months, is piquant with a delicious, fresh aftertaste.