

# RIDGE 1996

## CALIFORNIA

# GEYSERVILLE®

### 96 Geyserville Vineyard, bottled February 98

A short crop in '95 was followed by an even shorter one in '96. The old vineyards suffered the most; the young vines, even after we dropped a quarter of the clusters, produced reasonable yields. The zinfandels—with the intensity of so few grapes per vine—were particularly well-structured. In tastings, we preferred the wine with a modest six percent petite sirah, compared to a typical year's twelve to eighteen percent. Fourteen months in air-dried american oak, twenty-two percent of which was new, has integrated the tannins and added complexity to the spice and rich berry fruit. This superb zinfandel will be at its most appealing as we ring out the old century and enjoy the first years of the new. PD (1/98)

**GEYSERVILLE VINEYARD: 75% ZINFANDEL, 17% CARIGNANE, 6% PETITE SIRAH, 2% MATARO**  
**SONOMA COUNTY** ALCOHOL 14.9% BY VOLUME  
PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS BW 4488  
17100 MONTE BELLO ROAD, BOX 1810, CUPERTINO, CA 95015

This year marks the thirty-first anniversary of Ridge Geyserville Zinfandel from the magnificent old vines on the Trentadue family vineyard. Our long commitment here was strengthened in 1990, when we leased the thirty-six acres known as Whitten Ranch. Virtually all our zinfandel is harvested from this portion of the vineyard, ensuring a Geyserville for decades to come.

A succession of intense winter storms struck the vineyard in 1996; two particularly severe storms, with winds exceeding ninety-five miles per hour, each dropped ten inches of rain. These early storms did not adversely affect the vines, but a particularly ill-timed May shower struck just at bloom, knocking many flowers to the ground. Crop levels, especially on the "Old Patch" of zinfandel, carignane, and petite sirah—low-yielding to begin with—were drastically reduced.

Following this difficult spring, a very warm summer accelerated ripening. Sonoma temperatures were unusually high, with more than thirty days exceeding 100°. The extended heat wave brought on a harvest that was two to three weeks earlier than usual. Grapes from nineteenth-century Old Patch arrived August 28. The carignane block—equally old—was picked in mid-September.

The majority of grapes were fermented in small tanks. About forty percent (including half the zinfandel) were submerged below the surface of the liquid for gentle extraction. The remainder were allowed to float, their juice pumped extensively over the skins for maximum color and tannin extraction.

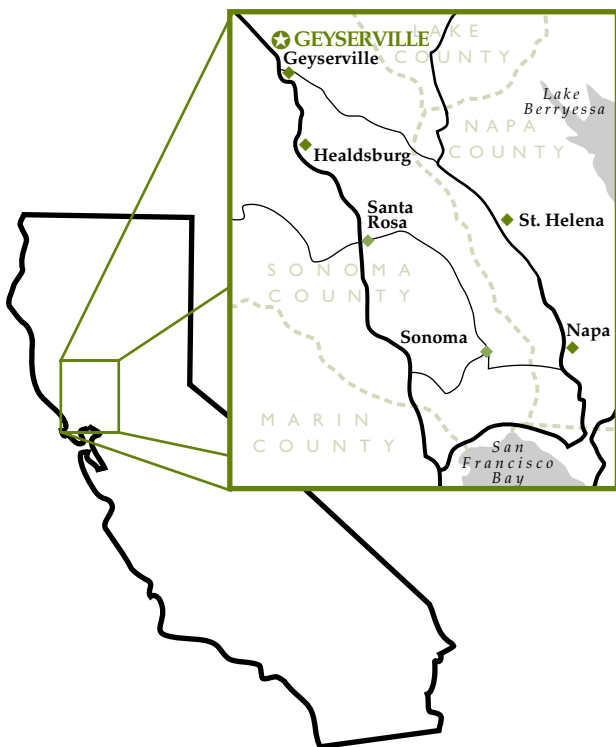
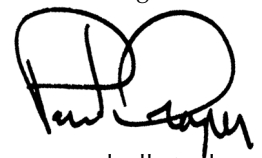
The zinfandel was of excellent quality—round, full, lovely. We included a significant percentage of carignane, intensifying the fruit and adding a velvety quality to the texture. A relatively small amount of petite sirah—roughly half of what has been typical—contributed depth and firm structure. Twenty-two percent of the wine was aged in new, air-dried, Missouri-grown-oak barrels, and about a third in two- and three-year-old barrels—all made by World Cooperage. After more than a year in oak, the wine is beautifully integrated, quite voluptuous, and enjoyable. Its fruit will be most intense over the next six years; additional complexity (with a muting of the dominant fruit) typically develops with fourteen or fifteen years of bottle age.

### TASTING NOTES

**COLOR:** Deep, dark ruby

**NOSE:** Forward aroma of carignane opens gradually to deep, rich berry/briar, vanilla oak. Butterscotch, green spice.

**PALATE:** Huge, sweet brambly blackberry; mixed dark fruits, cardamom/coriander spice. Intense, complex; round well-integrated tannins. Has structure for aging.



**Location:** Sonoma County, 3 miles south of the town of Geyserville on the western edge of Alexander Valley.

**Acreage:** 106-year-old zinfandel, 15 acres.  
35-year-old zinfandel, 12 acres.  
116-year-old mixed blacks, 5 acres.  
16-year-old petite sirah, 5 acres.  
106-year-old carignane, 7 acres.

**Yield:** 1-3 tons/acre

**Soils:** Gravelly loam

**Climate:** Occasional morning fog, warm days with frequent evening breezes.

**Elevation:** 200'

**Exposure:** Southern

**Owner:** Leo and Evelyn Trentadue