

RIDGE 1997

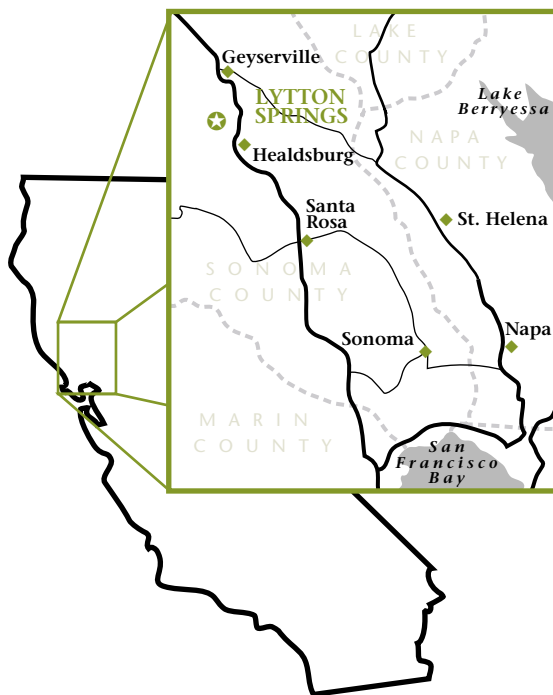
CALIFORNIA

LYTTON SPRINGS®

97 Lytton Springs Vineyard, bottled Feb 99

Anticipating El Niño by a year, the winter of 1996/1997 brought serious flooding throughout California—but with a difference: almost no rain fell after February. The mild, storm-free spring allowed the earliest and largest set in our twenty-six-year history with this vineyard. To ensure intensity and full ripeness, we dropped a third of the crop on the young vines, and ten percent on the old—still achieving record yields. Taking advantage of unusually rapid color and tannin extraction, we let the skins float during fermentation, rather than keeping them submerged. Delicious now, the 1997 is ripe and rustic—classic, "old-style" Lytton Springs. Its lush fruit will be most appealing over the next five years.

PD (1/99)



80% ZINFANDEL IN A VINEYARD BLEND WITH 15% PETITE SIRAH, 2% CARIGNANE, 2% MATARO AND 1% GRENACHE

DRY CREEK VALLEY

ALCOHOL 14.9% BY VOLUME

PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS, INC. BW 4488
17100 MONTE BELLO ROAD, BOX 1810, CUPERTINO, CALIFORNIA 95015

1997 marks the nineteenth year in which Ridge has made wine from the old zinfandel and mixed-varietal vineyard along Lytton Springs Road just north of the town of Healdsburg. The first vintage, in 1972, came from the nineteenth-century vines surrounding the small Lytton Springs Winery. We acquired this property—Lytton East—in 1991. The Ridge Lytton Springs comes from those vines, from the ten- to forty-year-old vines on Lytton West (acquired in 1995), and from the south block of the Maple vineyard just to the west. The mix of soils and the microclimate are the same for all three.

Welcome rains in December '96 and January '97 completely subsided by mid-February. Bud break was very early (March 3) and, after two years of underproducing, the vines recovered and set a heavy crop. Fortunately, below-average summer temperatures, more than an inch of rain in August, and the length of the season allowed full ripeness in yields which—even after thinning—were twenty percent above normal. Picking began September 6, when the grapes seemed to ripen all at once. The challenge was to harvest everything before rising sugars—and therefore final alcohol levels—rose too high.

As always, primary and secondary fermentations were carried out by naturally-occurring yeast and malolactic bacteria. We began with our typical submerged cap approach, but when it became clear that color and tannin were being extracted very easily, we permitted the cap of skins to float in the remaining eighty percent of fermentations. After malolactic, the wine was racked to air-dried american oak barrels, twenty-three percent of which were new.

This year's Lytton Springs showcases the expressive fruit of ripe zinfandel, and is more approachable than the '95 or '96. Classic aromas of raspberry and pepper are particularly pronounced. The rustic, mineral quality typical of Lytton Springs makes the plentiful fruit even more interesting. This fruit will be most intense during the five years following vintage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Ripstein".

Location: Eastern edge of Dry Creek appellation, Sonoma County.

Acreage: Lytton East: 107-year-old zinfandel, petite sirah, grenache, carignane, 45 acres.

Lytton West: 44-year-old zinfandel, grenache, carignane, mataro, 13 acres.

Yield: 1.5 - 3.0 tons / acre

Soils: Varied within each vineyard with a predominance of gravelly clay; gravelly clay loam on hillsides.

Climate: Fog in a.m., warm sunny afternoons, breezes in late p.m.

Elevation: 80' - 160'

Exposure: Southeasterly

Owner: Lytton East & West - Ridge Vineyards

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www.ridgewine.com