

# RIDGE 1998

## CALIFORNIA

### GEYSERVILLE®

#### 98 Geyserville, bottled January 2000

Contrasting sharply with last year's early start, the 1998 growing season began later than any in over three decades; harvest was not complete until early November. Given the firm acid of Geyserville's ripe fruit this year, we allowed the grapes to float during fermentation—rather than submerging them, as we usually do with zinfandel. This slowed an unusually rapid tannin extraction and lengthened time on the skins, which in turn intensified flavors and richness. After a natural secondary fermentation, the wine aged for twelve months in air-dried american oak barrels, twenty-three percent of which were new. This lovely, full-bodied zinfandel—our thirty-third vintage from the Geyserville vineyard—will be at its best over the next five to six years.

PD (12/99)

**GEYSERVILLE VINEYARD: 74% ZINFANDEL, 15% PETITE SIRAH, 10% CARIGNANE, 1% MATARO**  
**SONOMA COUNTY** ALCOHOL 14.1% BY VOLUME  
 PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS BW 4488  
 17100 MONTE BELLO ROAD, BOX 1810, CUPERTINO, CA 95015



This is the thirty-third successive vintage of Ridge Geyserville from old vines on the Trentadue family vineyard. The majority of grapes are grown on the thirty-six-acre Whitten Ranch portion of the property. Ridge obtained a long-term lease on Whitten Ranch in 1990, guaranteeing access to this exceptional fruit for several more decades. All the vines at Geyserville are head-trained and spur-pruned; we leave six to ten spurs per vine. Over half the vines are thirty-five years of age or older, some almost one hundred twenty.

Unlike the 1997 growing season, which began early and continued with very consistent weather, 1998's began later than any in the last three decades. Winter was very cold, and snow was visible on the low-lying hills surrounding the vineyard. Cool, wet weather persisted through spring, delaying bud break until late March. Unexpected late-May storms affected fruit formation (set); there was twenty percent less fruit than is customary—and far less than in 1997. Over the course of the growing season, temperatures moved from cool to very warm and back again, delaying ripening to mid-October. The last grapes were harvested in early November.

In response to the firmer-than-usual acidity of this unusual season's ripe fruit, we adjusted fermentation procedure. Rather than using our typical submerged-cap approach, we let the grape skins float on top of the juice. This gave us more control over tannin extraction and allowed us to lengthen time on the skins for enhanced richness, flavor, and intensity. After natural primary and secondary fermentations in tank, the wine was racked to barrel and aged for twelve months in air-dried american oak, about a quarter of which was new.

To assemble the wine, we tasted and re-tasted the various vineyard parcels, eventually deciding to include more petite sirah, and less carignane. This contributed to depth of structure, while bringing the bright, jammy zinfandel fruit into focus. The '98 Geyserville is an elegant, full-bodied field blend zinfandel, showing ripe, forward fruit, a lively, integrated palate, and a long, distinct finish. Drinkable now, it will develop beautifully over the next five to six years.

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

**Acreage:** 37-year-old zinfandel, 12 acres.  
 8-year-old zinfandel, 15 acres.  
 118-year-old mixed blacks, 5 acres.  
 18-year-old petite sirah, 5 acres.  
 8-year-old petite sirah, 3.5 acres.  
 108-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

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[www.ridgewine.com](http://www.ridgewine.com)