

RIDGE

VINEYARDS

Exceptional single-vineyard wines since 1962

SPRING 2015



EAST BENCH: ORGANIC CERTIFICATION OF A VINEYARD

In 2000, Ridge was fortunate to procure a lease on property just above our Lytton Springs vineyard. This benchland jewel had been planted to grapes before Prohibition, but abandoned for the rest of the twentieth century, and used as pasture. We knew the soil well. (It's Sites loam, for those who care to know.) Over the next two years, we planted the land to our four favorite zinfandel selections. By 2006, we knew we had a wonderful site for a stand-alone wine that could showcase the exuberance of pure Dry Creek Valley zinfandel; we labeled it "East Bench."

Ridge had been experimenting with organic grape-growing for several years prior to 2008, when we decided to phase in organic certification. The transition period for such certification in the U.S. is three years. The designated acreage is farmed organically, using only organic soil amendments, crop protectants, and fertilizers. At the end of three years, your organic certifying agent incorporates a site visit with a thorough review of crop-input records—coordinated with the California Department of Pesticide Regulations to make sure that only organic crop protectants were used. At the same time, you must register with the state the amount and type of organic acreage and crops. Once you pass inspection, (and pay fees to your certifying agent and the state!) your grapes can be labeled as "organically grown." When you have received certification, the agent will inspect your ranches and records annually.

East Bench is the first of our estate wines to be labeled as made with "organically (and sustainably) grown grapes." East Bench was our organic certification guinea pig: the vines are young, and come from a single small

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RIDGE 2013 EAST BENCH® ZINFANDEL

DRY CREEK VALLEY 100% ZINFANDEL
SONOMA COUNTY 14.9% ALCOHOL BY VOLUME
GROWN, PRODUCED & BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS
650 LYTTON SPRINGS ROAD, HEALDSBURG, CALIF. 95448

2013 Zinfandel, East Bench, bottled January 2015
The growing season here began with unusually warm weather, and the vines responded with a full crop. Though we dropped fruit in July for optimum ripeness, we had record yields. After fermentation, we chose five of the seven parcels, combined them, and racked to barrel for twelve months' aging. An excellent example of both varietal and site, this wine exhibits the red fruit and peppery flavors characteristic of Dry Creek zinfandels. Enjoyable now, it will evolve fully over the next five years. JO(10/14)

Ingredients: Hand-harvested, sustainably grown, organic grapes; indigenous yeasts; naturally occurring malolactic bacteria; 1.6% water addition; oak from barrel aging; minimum effective SO₂.
750 mL
408.867.3233

®REGISTERED TRADEMARK
www.ridgevine.com

The 2013 East Bench is our first wine to be made with 100% certified organic grapes. The ingredient box on the back label (pictured above) will indicate the wine is made from organically grown fruit. All of our estate vineyards are in the process of completing their certification and we expect more of our wines to be labeled as organic in the next few years.

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ranch with a single soil series, all on gentle, mostly-flat bench terrain. In short, it was chosen because it was easiest. Our Lytton Springs vineyards, on the other hand, comprise five different soil types in multiple blocks, including vines of widely varying age on varying terrain that includes flats, hillsides and bench.

We have moved slowly and carefully in the quest to grow our grapes organically, and are now the largest organic grower in Sonoma County, and in the Santa Cruz Mountains. We have chosen organic certification so that our farming—free of conventional chemicals and additives—is as traditional as our winemaking.

David Gates, V.P. of Vineyard Operations

Consumers, particularly younger ones, want to experience craft. They want to be told the truth about what they are drinking—not a story fabricated by a marketing company in a downtown skyscraper. Craft, authentic, real, artisan—these are the concepts that have defined Ridge for the last fifty years. Not because we felt they would resonate with young consumers, but because we felt, and still feel, that they are the best way to make fine wine. So when I'm asked "What's new at Ridge?" I will usually smile and simply say, "Not much."

David Amadia, V.P. of Sales and Marketing

EAST BENCH — AT A GLANCE

History

Ridge has made the East Bench as a single-site zinfandel since 2006. One of our few single-variety wines, this zinfandel vineyard sits high on top of the bench land that overlooks Dry Creek Valley from the east.

Vineyard

First RIDGE East Bench: 2006

Location: East Bench Vineyard is located on the Eastern bench of Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County

Soils: Gravelly clay loam

Vines: Zinfandel planted in 2000 from three 19th century vineyard selections

Training: Head trained (no trellis), spur pruned.

Yields: 4 tons per acre

Farming: Organically farmed; fish-friendly agriculture



CRAFT IS NOT SCALABLE

A typical question that I field when meeting with our distributors, importers, and other customers is “What’s new at Ridge?” An easy question to answer, but the answer isn’t generally too exciting. Once in a blue moon we will introduce a new wine, or bring back a wine we made in the past. But, for the most part, Ridge is simply focused on continuous improvement. This is not a sexy answer. After fifty years of producing wines from the same vineyard sites, and fifty years of perfecting our craft, the wines are of amazing quality—but not because of “what’s new.”

The word that Jon Bonné, Wine Editor for the San Francisco Chronicle, would likely use to describe how we make wine at Ridge is “craft.” I recently heard Jon speak at the annual Wine Market Council symposium; his presentation was titled “American Wine Grows Up.” He maintains that the California wine industry has been focused for the past two decades on size (volume) and on an over-the-top style based on ripeness. He said that today the industry can no longer focus solely on size, “because you can’t focus on craft and size at the same time.” Bonné believes a renewed focus on craft is needed to change the trajectory of the industry and keep consumers engaged.

Ridge has never been about volume. Production size has remained unchanged for more than twenty years. The emphasis has always been on craft and on quality. Start with great vineyards, use pre-industrial winemaking techniques, and continue to learn with every vintage. True craft is not scalable. It is by definition limited, and can only occur when quantities are sufficiently limited to allow the focus craft requires.

In 2006, Jon Bonné selected Paul Draper as “winemaker of the year.” He writes of the choice in his recent book, *The New California Wine*. “My choice of Draper came with a subtler message. In the midst of an industry that had blindly embraced technology and by-the-numbers winemaking, he was an outspoken traditionalist. He rejected commercial yeast and fancy flavor enhancing techniques. He believed that winemaking was sacrosanct, a true expression of the land.”

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2013 Geyserville

Tasting Notes: Black cherry, plum, toasted oak, gravelly-rock mineral. Full-bodied, deep flavors of bramble, blackberries; fresh mint; chalky tannins. Sensuous, layered flavors persist in a long finish.



2013 East Bench Zinfandel

Tasting Notes: Ripe jammy raspberry fruit with pepper, eucalyptus and sweet toasted oak. Rich brambly fruit on the palate, sensuous texture and a long layered finish.



2013 Paso Robles Zinfandel

Tasting Notes: Scented cherries, pomegranate, rhubarb, pepper spice. Cherry jam on entry, lively acid, fruit-covered tannins, sweet oak finish.



2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate

Tasting Notes: Pungent cassis and blackberry fruits, fennel, cola, toasted oak, clove and cardamom spice. Full bodied, with structured tannins and lively acid; blackberry fruit, fennel, sweet toasty oak, crushed-rock mineral; a long, intense finish.



2012 Merlot Estate

Tasting Notes: Ripe blackberry fruit, cola, exotic spice, eucalyptus. Elegant entry; full body, with black currant fruit, dried herbs, firm acid; red fruit and sweet oak in a lingering finish.



2013 Chardonnay Estate

Tasting Notes: Green apple, pear, pineapple, honeysuckle, wet stone. Citrus fruit on entry, lemon zest, lively acid, elegant texture; lingering crushed-rock mineral finish.



1962 to 2012
50th
ANNIVERSARY

RIDGE
VINEYARDS

PO Box 1810
Cupertino, CA 95015

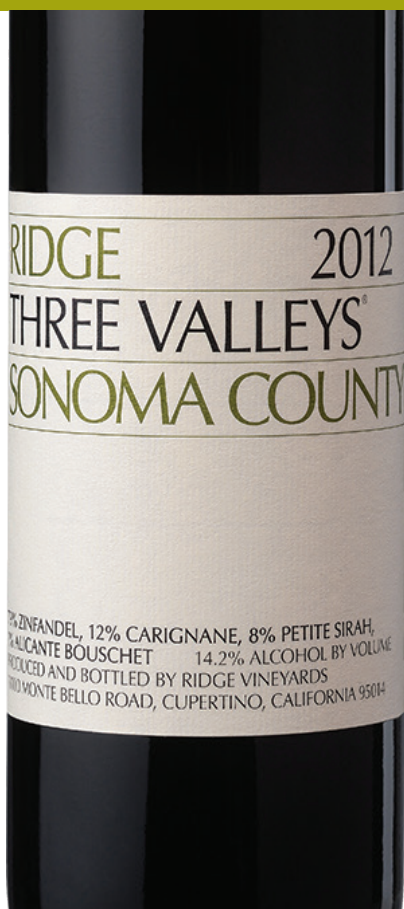


RIDGE	2012
MONTE BELLO	

With the release of 2012 vintage of Monte Bello this fall, Ridge celebrates 50 years of fine winemaking. The first vines were planted and construction begun on our stone and redwood winery in 1886. The first vintage of Monte Bello was in 1892, one hundred and twenty years ago. In 1959 the Ridge partners purchased eight acres of cabernet replanted in the late 1940s and forty acres of abandoned vineyard. They rebanded as Ridge Vineyards and made the superb vintage of 1962.

www.ridgewine.com/wholesale

2012 THREE VALLEYS



90
points



"This sexy wine reveals lots of raspberry and black cherry fruit, medium to full body, beautiful purity, delicate notes of spice, and no hint of oak. Enjoy this fleshy red over the next 3-4 years."

—Robert Parker, Issue 215, October 2014