

ZINSKEY LATE  
LOS CARNEROS  
NAPA VALLEY, 2004



ROBERT SINSKEY VINEYARDS  
R S V  
NAPA, CALIFORNIA

## ONCE IN A BLUE MOON, THE SAGA OF ZINSKEY LATE...



It just won't happen every year. Sometimes it's going to be sweet, and sometimes it's not. It all depends on the weather... and on a willingness to roll the dice with nature.

RSV's half acre of Zinfandel vines crest the top of the Vandal Vineyard in the cool Carneros region. Conventional wisdom preaches that the area is too cool to ripen Zin. Yes, it may be problematic some years, but other years, well, perhaps a different "wisdom" is at work. Each harvest, long after RSV's other grapes have been put to bed, the Zin ripens. The resulting berries are evenly ripe, rich with black fruit flavor and zingy with mouth

watering acidity. The resulting dry wine is more of a claret-style Zin than an over the top, potent, new California-style of rocket fuel, er, um... wine.

Once in a blue moon, these already late ripening grapes hit peak maturity in the midst of a late fall Indian summer. This is the season of the gambler. If it rains, the fruit is lost. However, if nature keeps her end of the bargain, holding winter at bay for several more short, warm days, then RSV can employ an ancient method of intensification (see winegrowing notes) that magically transports the grapes to where elegance meets hedonism.

This is only the third bottling of the Zinskey Late in the history of the Vandal Vineyard, and with just four barrels produced, there are precious few bottles to go around. Don't forget, the joy of a rare wine is popping the cork in the company of those you cherish most... just make sure it's a cherished few as the Zinskey Late only comes in a half bottle!

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## WINEGROWING NOTES:

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Old School - Sometimes it's best to abandon modern technology in favor of the wisdom of the ancients. In crafting the Zinskey Late, winemaker Jeff Virnig employs a winemaking technique the Greeks picked up on a visit to Crete some 2,500 years ago. They watched the Cretans twist the stems of their grape bunches, cutting them off from sap, but leaving them to hang on the vine for several more days. This dried the grapes a bit, concentrating sugar and flavor, while other more subtle changes occurred within the grapes to create exotic and complex tastes like those you find in the Zinskey Late.

Most of the celebrated wines of antiquity were made in this manner and the method still persists all over Europe. Vin Santo, Amarone, Vin de Paille and even Tokaji are just a few of the famous wines made with dehydrated grapes. For the ancients, the drying process was an early method of concentration that ensured ripe fruit every vintage, even difficult ones, but it proved popular for another reason, too. These wines, naturally high in alcohol and sugar, were robust and sturdy. In other words, they were indestructible. Given the relatively primitive winemaking, storage and transportation practices of the day, they were the only wines the ancients had that would successfully age.

Some vintages, when Indian summer pushes the rains back another week or two, RSV does it Cretan-style. The vineyard crew gives each cluster of Zinfandel grapes a half twist, leaving them to dry on the vine for several days. In 2004, sugars climbed to around 32 degrees brix at harvest. The wine slowly fermented for two weeks in small, open-top, square bins to about 9 degrees brix. After pressing, fermentation continued until the yeast went under the table at 16.4% alcohol, leaving a pleasurable sweet 4.3 degrees brix. Four French oak barrels of Zinskey Late aged for eighteen months in the RSV caves.

## TASTING NOTES:

Zinskey Late, never a wallflower, asserts itself with aromas and flavors of uber-ripe plums and berries. Below the primary fruit notes lurk subtle yet beguiling hints of cider spice, vanilla, apricot, almond, cocoa and candied orange rind. The wine is luscious... no, the wine is yummy. Just remember that Zinskey late is 16.4% percent alcohol, so please, be forewarned as knowledge is power.

Though a perfect fireside sipping wine, the luscious late-harvest Zinskey has enough mouth-watering, snappy acidity to suggest pairings with rich cheeses like St. Augur or desserts made with caramel or chocolate.

Certified Organic Vineyards, Biodynamically Farmed

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## BITTERSWEET END

Bliss is a chocolaty treat and a glass of a subtly sweet red wine. These two delicious bites can be made ahead, so that as dinner nears its end, you can sit back and enjoy. Neither of these treats is overly sweet. They have a refreshing bittersweet chocolate edge, the perfect foil for the refreshingly rich “raspberriness” of the Zinskey Late - a seriously fun wine that wraps up the loose ends nicely.

Until the next wine...

Maria Helm-Sinskey



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## DARK CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

(3 dozen truffles)

*8 ounces dark chocolate, 60%-70% cocoa solids, chopped*  
*1 cup heavy cream*  
*1/4 teaspoon sea salt*  
*2 ounces unsalted European Style butter*  
*1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder*

1. To make the ganache, place the chocolate in a stainless steel or glass bowl.
2. Bring the cream and salt to a boil and whisk it gently into the chocolate. Stir; do not beat, with the whisk, until the chocolate has completely melted.
3. Stir in the butter until completely incorporated.
4. Cool to room temperature and then place the ganache in the refrigerator for 2 hours until firm but still soft enough to scoop. You may also cover the ganache and chill it overnight or until you are ready to use it. Soften it slightly until scoop-able at room temperature to use.
5. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. Use a small 1/2 ounce ice cream scoop to scoop the ganache and place the balls on the prepared pan. Chill the truffles for 1 hour.
6. Put the cocoa powder in a shallow pan. Remove the truffles from the refrigerator and roll them into balls between your hands. They do not have to be completely round or smooth.
7. Place them in the cocoa pan a few at a time and roll to coat with powder. Place in a serving bowl or store in a tightly sealed plastic container in the refrigerator for 1 week. Bring to room temperature before serving.



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## CHOCOLATE SHORTBREAD WITH VANILLA CREAM FILLING

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(Yield: 16 2-inch sandwich cookies)

*1 stick unsalted butter, room temperature*

*1/2 cup powdered sugar, sifted*

*1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract*

*1/3 cup Dutch processed\* or natural cocoa powder, sifted*

*3/4 cup all-purpose flour*

*1/2 teaspoon kosher salt*

*Vanilla Cream Filling, Recipe Follows*

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a stand mixer, fitted with a paddle attachment, cream the butter until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the powdered sugar and beat until fluffy again. Add the vanilla extract to the mixture and then the cocoa powder. Beat until they are combined.
3. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add the flour and salt and mix gently until incorporated. The dough will be very soft and slightly sticky. Knead the dough two or three times on a lightly floured board to incorporate all the ingredients. Place the dough between two sheets of parchment paper or plastic wrap and roll 1/8-inch thick. Wrap well and chill for 40 minutes.
4. Remove the dough from the refrigerator. Peel off the top sheet of paper or plastic and cut into 2-inch rounds. Transfer to a parchment lined sheet pan. Mark with a cookie stamp if you have one available. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes in the preheated oven. Remove the cookies from the baking sheet and cool on a rack.
5. Make sure the shortbread is thoroughly cool before filling. To fill, put the vanilla cream filling into a pastry bag with a number 6 plain tip or a plastic bag with the tip of a corner cut off so that the opening is 1/2-inch wide.
6. Line up 16 cookies so that the side that was baked against the pan is facing up. Starting with one cookie, pipe a thick ring about 1/8 of an inch from the edge of the cookie. Fill in the center of the ring with a dot of filling and place another cookie on top of the filling. Press lightly until the filling oozes almost to the edge of the cookie. Repeat with the remaining cookies.

\*Dutch processed cocoa has been alkalized which allows the chocolate flavor and color to bloom. This creates a deeper chocolate flavor and also a richer dark color after the cookies are baked. It also reduces the acidity naturally found in cocoa powder. Regular cocoa powder can be used as a straight substitution for Dutch processed powder. The resultant cookies will be lighter in color but not in flavor.

## VANILLA CREAM FILLING

(Yield: 2 cups)

*4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature*

*1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract*

*1/8 teaspoon kosher salt*

*1 cup plus 2 tablespoons powdered sugar*

1. Place all the ingredients in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment.
2. Start on slow speed to combine the ingredients, and then increase the speed to high and beat until the filling is very white and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes.
3. Place the filling in a piping bag or plastic zip lock bag with the corner cut off to pipe into cookies. The leftover filling may be chilled and reused again. Wrap very tightly and store in the refrigerator. To reuse, bring to room temperature and then whip until fluffy again.

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