

Thacher Winery 2006 Zinfandel, Paso Robles, California

Our selection this month comes from Paso Robles CA. Paso Robles AVA was established in 1983 and is located midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles on California's central coast. The area covers roughly 24 square miles and dozens of distinct micro climates. Characteristics of the region include the greatest daily temperature swing of any California wine region, varied soil compositions and dozens of distinct microclimates. The area is best known for red wines: Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel.

Robert M. Parker, wrote of Paso Robles, "Today there are more than 170 wineries in Paso Robles, and the area is going through a metamorphosis. There are now properties producing wines that are revelations of elegance, finesse, complexity and flavor concentrations. Major progress has largely come not from makers of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot, but from a group of producers often referred to as the Rhone Rangers, specializing in grape varieties of the Rhone Valley of France."

The Thacher Winery is the dream of Sherman and Michelle Thacher whose 'story' they claim is typical. Both were working at a brewery – he as bartender and she as a waitress. They met, fell in love and later married. After graduating from UC Davis, Sherman began his professional career as a brewer for the Los Gatos Brewing Company – a position he held for 16 years. Since 1993, Sherman has been making wine professionally in the Santa Cruz Mountains and in Paso Robles. Michelle was at UC Santa Barbara working on her degree. They would meet midway in Paso Robles and one night, as the last guests at a wine tasting room, the magic of the wine and the evening convinced them that Paso Robles was the place for them to be. In 2001, they began their search for property in the Paso Robles area and in 2006, left the Santa Cruz area to begin life as Paso Roblans.

For decades, quarter horses, cattle and cowboys roamed the hills of the historic Kentucky Ranch where today the Thacher Winery calls home. Since 2004, Thacher Winery with its grasshopper label has been hand crafting wines from superb dry farmed and head trained vineyards on the west side of Paso Robles. Their boutique production of Rhone blends and Zinfandels, demonstrate local subtleties and true westside terrior.

Tasting Notes: The 2006 Zinfandel is made from 100% Zinfandel grapes from two westside vineyards – 85% Je T'aime Vineyard and 15% Hastings Ranch Vineyard. A total of 620 cases were produced and the wine is now sold out at the winery. The wine is clear, with a medium intense ruby core, fading to a pale ruby edge and water-white rim. On the nose, the wine is clean and developing. Aromas are complex and medium plus intensity. Aromas include Bing cherry, cranberry, red currant, toffee, smoke, hibiscus tea, leather and oak spice. On the palate, the wine is dry with medium intense structural tannin and a silky body. The finish is long and has lasting berry flavors. The wine is ready to drink and will age 3 -4 years before becoming fully developed.

Silver Medal – 2010 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition

Gold Medal – 2009 California Mid State Fair

Food pairing: Zinfandels are happiest when paired with hearty red meats, tomato based pasta dishes and strong cheeses such as Parmesan, sharp Cheddar, blue cheese, Asagio or aged Gouda. Dark chocolate and Zinfandel will bring smiles to dessert lovers.