



Home / News & Features / Tasting Highlights

10 Knockout Zinfandels From Napa and Sonoma



Tim Fish Posted: September 21, 2015

New reviews of California reds from the winning 2013 vintage

Tasting Highlights bring the best wines from our editors' most recent tastings to WineSpectator.com members.

Zinfandel fans are spoiled these days. The 2013 vintage comes on the heels of the excellent 2012s, making it two winning years in a row. This week's selection of new releases showcases the 2013s at their best.

The growing season certainly cooperated. The weather was ideal from start to finish, with sunny and fairly warm weather, and it all culminated in one of the earliest harvests on record.

If you're enjoying the 2012s, then the 2013s are for you. They're similar in style, if a bit more dense and energetic.

The top wines this week come from a new winery and a familiar face. If Gallo knows anything it's Dry Creek Zinfandel. The wine giant has been in the region for decades, and the 2013 Signature Series demonstrates that legacy.

McGah Family is the new player, and its Scarlett Zinfandel was produced by winemaker Mike Smith, who learned the craft from his mentor, Thomas Brown. Beran might not be a well-known brand but you may recognize the man behind it: Joe Wagner, whose family produces popular wines like Caymus and Belle Glos.

These are just a few of the 2013s that I'll be tasting in the coming months. Stay tuned for more updates.

E. & J. GALLO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Signature Series 2013 Score: 91 | \$35

A zesty and appealingly briary Zinfandel, offering focus and power. Aromas of blackberry and licorice combine with ripe flavors of black raspberry, cracked pepper and toasted sage. Drink now through 2022. 400 cases made.—T.F.

MCGAH FAMILY Zinfandel Rutherford Scarlett 2013 Score: 91 | \$38

Bold, ripe and rich, but well-structured, with aromas of blackberry pie, toasted spice and licorice. The plush texture lingers on the finish. Drink now through 2022. 108 cases made.—T.F.

BERAN Zinfandel Sonoma County 2013 Score: 90 | \$35

Deep and intense, with aromas of wild berry and licorice to the bold, ripe flavors of dark plum, smoky cracked pepper and grilled herb. The tannins are firm. Drink now through 2021. 3,000 cases made.—T.F.

KOKOMO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Timber Crest Vineyard 2013 Score: 90 | \$36

Rich and vibrant, with smoky back raspberry aromas and layered flavors of cherry pie, cracked pepper and fresh sage. Drink now through 2021. 472 cases made.—T.F.

LAGIER MEREDITH Tribidrag Mount Veeder 2013 Score: 90 | \$45

A distinctive variation on the Zinfandel theme, this offers aromas of smoky huckleberry and zesty flavors of grilled anise, dried cherry and freshly cracked pepper. Drink now through 2021. 137 cases made.—T.F.

LASSETER FAMILY Zinfandel Sonoma Valley L'Ame du Sage Old Vine 2013 Score: 90 | \$48

A lively and briary red, with aromas of bright cherry and underbrush to the crisp, well-focused flavors of raspberry, spicy sage and licorice. Drink now through 2021. 125 cases made.—T.F.

MIRÓ Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley 2013 Score: 90 | \$24

Soft and supple, with floral raspberry and saffraas aromas and elegantly layered flavors of cherry pie, cracked pepper and licorice. Drink now through 2022. 702 cases made.—T.F.

PORTALUPI Zinfandel Russian River Valley Dolinsek Ranch Old Vine 2013 Score: 90 | \$48

Soft, plush and loaded with fruit. Aromas of black raspberry and toasted spice lead to sleek flavors of baked cherry, blueberry, caramel and licorice. Drink now through 2021. 552 cases made.—T.F.

QUIVIRA Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Black Boar 2013 Score: 90 | \$45

Brooding and opaque, this is a real bruiser. Aromas of tar and smoky black raspberry lead to dense flavors of dark wild berry, licorice and grilled herb. The tannins are big but ripe. Best from 2017 through 2023. 830 cases made.—T.F.

ARMIDA Zinfandel Sonoma Coast Parmelee-Hill Vineyard 2013 Score: 89 | \$48

Sleek and balanced, with rose petal and cherry aromas and elegantly layered flavors of fresh raspberry, smoky anise and mineral. Drink now through 2022. 220 cases made.—T.F.