



**Wine makes every meal an occasion, every table more elegant, every day more civilized. - Andre Simon, "Commonsense of Wine"**

When we first started PlumpJack's Red Rogues' Club, we envisioned choosing three red wines from a single producer. We have been searching for a single producer whose wines fit our parameters and chose Ridge Winery because Ridge Winery represents quality, history, and value.

The history of Ridge Winery really began in the late 1800's, when a doctor from Northern Italy purchased 180 acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains and planted grapes for wine. The very first vineyard was planted on Monte Bello Ridge near what is now known as the Silicon Valley. In the 1940's, a theologian who loved wine purchased 48 acres of the original property and planted 8 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon. In 1959, several engineers from Stanford, seeking a weekend retreat for their families, bought this "middle" vineyard. One of the partners, Dave Bennion, made his first vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon from Monte Bello fruit, which was unheard of at the time because very little Cabernet existed in 1959. Thus, the world-renown Monte Bello Cabernet Sauvignon was born.

Dave Bennion made wines from this vineyard for 10 years before he hired the man whose very name is synonymous with Zinfandel—Paul Draper. While Ridge still produces this very limited and expensive Cabernet Sauvignon, today its reputation is based on Zinfandel.

Paul Draper has been the driving force behind Ridge for more than three decades. He truly has been a pioneer in creating the contemporary Zinfandel. Paul and Dave began producing Zinfandel first out of economic necessity (the 8 acres of Cabernet at Monte Bello was only producing a few thousand cases) and then out of a curiosity about the grape itself. Due to Paul's growing enthusiasm regarding Zinfandel, Ridge began searching for old vine Zinfandel which had been planted in the late 1800's by many of the Italian immigrants throughout California. After many samplings, Paul decided that the best Zinfandel was grown in Sonoma County. Later Ridge purchased Lytton Springs Winery in Sonoma initially for the old-vine Zinfandel.

The three Ridge Zinfandels that we are featuring are a true reflection of Paul Draper's philosophy: Let the fruit do the talking with very little outside manipulation. He uses American oak instead of French oak; he believes that the natural yeast on the grapes is perfect without additional added yeast; he believes in the French style of winemaking (Chateau Latour is one of his favorites)—with a modicum of extraction of fruit without the current trend of high extraction and higher alcohol. He wrote the book on using old vines for Zinfandel in the early 70's. He pioneered the use of single vineyard designations for his wines. Due to his philosophy of winemaking, Ridge wines do have years of aging potential. He has been a pioneer in blending other varietal wines such as Carignane, Petite Sirah, and Grenache with Zinfandel. This quarter's selections are Three Valleys—a blend, Paso Robles—100% Zinfandel, and Lytton Springs—a blend.

**Some common Zinfandel Descriptors:** Black berry, black cherry, spicy, jammy, black pepper, cinnamon, rhubarb, cassis, raspberry, and many, many more. The Davis aroma wheel is a great source of aroma information and the following link will take you to a wealth of descriptors: [http://www.zinfandel.org/about\\_zin/aromawheel/](http://www.zinfandel.org/about_zin/aromawheel/)

**Five Reasons Why PlumpJack Loves Ridge Zinfandels:**

1. Because until recently Zinfandel was only grown in California.
2. The wines are expressive of the varietals.
3. You get a good bang for your buck
4. Believe it or not, it goes with sushi.
5. It's the perfect wine to have with pizza on a Friday night.

### **Here are some facts about Ridge:**

Winemaker: Paul Draper

Owner: Akihiko Otsuka

Location of Winery: The Monte Bello Winery is in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Lytton Springs Winery is located in the Dry Creek Valley in Sonoma County on Lytton Springs Road.

### **2002 Three Valleys**

**\$19.99**

Varietal Components: 76% Zinfandel, 13% Carignane, 8% Petite Sirah, 3% Mataro

Location of Vineyards: Six vineyards in Dry Creek Valley, six vineyards in Alexander Valley, two vineyards in Russian River Valley

Age of Vines: 20% are 80-100 year-old-vines, 50% are 35-50 year-old-vines, 30% are 6-12 year-old-vines.

Cases produced: 16,000

Weather: Warm Summer and Fall. Cool nights.

Alcohol: 14.3%

Tasting Profile: This is rich and full-bodied. Elegant and rustic at the same time. Hints of fresh tobacco and a new car's leather. Spicy and extracted blackberry, good structure and very balanced.

Aging Potential: 3-6 years

Food Pairings: Pizza, lasagna, lamb chops, cheeseburgers

**Interesting Fact:** Notice the front of the label—it doesn't say that it is Zinfandel because to call it Zinfandel, the wine must be 85% of that varietal.

### **2002 Paso Robles**

**\$24.99**

Varietal Components: 100% Zinfandel

Location of Vineyards: Beni Dusi's Vineyard 3 miles south of Paso Robles

Age of vines: 81 year old vines

Cases Produced: 4,600

Weather: Hot days and cool nights

Alcohol: 14.8%

Tasting Profile: Bright black cherry, spicy, elegant and very pretty. Nice hints of oak, medium-bodied. lingering finish. Smooth and well balanced.

Aging Potential: Drink now or hold for up to 5 years

Food Pairings: Pizza, goat cheese, sautéed vegetables, flank steak

**Interesting Fact:** This is the only Ridge Vineyard south of the San Francisco Bay Area. Also the original owners are still farming this vineyard. This is one of the few Ridge wines that is 100% Zinfandel.

### **2002 Lytton Springs**

**\$29.99**

Varietal Components: 75% Zinfandel, 20% Petite Sirah, 5% Carignane

Location of Vineyards: The hills and the bench land in the Dry Creek Valley

Age of Vines: Lytton East vines are 100 + years old; Lytton West vines are 50 + years old

Cases Produced: 16,000

Weather: Cool April and May. Summer warm days and cooler evenings

Alcohol: 14.4%

Tasting Profile: Deep, rich color, and full-bodied. Black pepper, ripe red plum, spicy. Hints of anise, elegant and lively. Long finish

Aging Potential: Approachable now or can mature up to 10 years

Food Pairings: Pizza from A 16, pasta Bolognese, steak, rack of lamb

**Interesting Fact:** The 1st Lytton Springs Zinfandel was produced in 1972. Although check out this label as well, it can't be called a Zin due to the blend being only 75% Zinfandel.