



CHATEAU MONTELENA
ESTABLISHED 1882

2021 Estate Zinfandel

Notes from the Winemaker, Matt Crafton

INTRODUCTION

For something to appear effortless, an incredible amount of effort has to be expended. It's paradoxical, but accurate. This is just as true in winemaking as it is in life, be it an intricately choreographed ballet or a perfectly-timed pass from the quarterback. To the untrained eye, both appear completely natural, which only heightens our sense of awe. What we don't see are the hours, months, and years of grit, vicious preparation, and focus. There's nothing "hands-off" about accomplishment. At Montelena, the brilliant transparency so evident in our wines is the product of astonishing effort, not merely getting out of the way. True simplicity isn't that simple.

VINTAGE WEATHER

An early spring and plenty of warmth woke the vines up early. Despite the lack of winter rain, the dry-farmed vines thrived as the summer heat arrived. By June, it was clear that the vintage would be light on volume, as small clusters with fewer than normal berries had set. This is actually an advantage for Zinfandel, as the sun-exposed berries ripened in unison, which is always the goal. Harvest was methodical and predictable allowing for the development of complex flavors and textures.

NOSE

The wine opens with fresh cherries, black pepper and tea leaves. It's perfume-like and intoxicating. The varietal character is quite evident right now: forest floor, briar and roasted mushroom. That earthiness, which is part of the sense of place, is an excellent counterpoint to the dynamic fresh fruit, which leans red at first but quickly transitions to dark and dried aromas over time.

PALATE

Bright, candy-like fruit on the palate layers into refined but slightly-angular tannin adding tension and chewiness. Far from being fully-refined, this wine still has some edges, which add spiciness and hint at its future development. The acid beautifully cuts through the tension, imparting the freshness and liveliness one would expect from a young Montelena Zinfandel. That acid should recede and integrate over time, bolstering complexity and helping to maintain food-friendliness.

FINISH

The wine closes with dark chocolate and mint. The tannins here are leathery and there's a hint of graphite from the barrel toast. Above all, it's mouthwatering, teasing with grape candy and kirsch.

Technical Information

HARVEST DATES

September 9 – September 18

ALCOHOL

14.3%

BLEND

100% Zinfandel/Primitivo

BARREL AGING

16 months in French and American oak, 18% new

BOTTLING DATE

March 2023

WINEMAKER

Matt Crafton