



## ZINFANDEL: THE PERFECT BBQ WINE

Do you love red wine? Have you been debating what to serve at your end of Summer BBQ's? Zinfandel is the perfect wine for your next outdoor gathering.

With it's notes of smoke and pepper, Zinfandel highlights the delicious flavors of meat and veggies that have been flame kissed on the grill. Chicken, pork (we are thinking a rack of ribs) or steak, it doesn't matter which meat you choose, but you may want to consider the seasoning and

sauce when choosing your perfect Zin companion. Classic bbq sauce, with its slightly sweet and spicy characteristics, is the best pairing for Zinfandel.

With its slightly higher alcohol content (usually between 14-16%), you don't have to worry that Zinfandel will be overpowered by the meal (or vice versa); Zinfandel has the body to support the richness of a BBQ.

If you have a penchant for sweet and tangy sauces, look for a Zin with ripe fruit flavors that will complement the zing of the sauce.



Burgers, pulled pork, smoked brisket, spicy chicken, and steak all long to be paired with the dark red fruits and the underlying spice of the perfect Zinfandel!

Our team LOVES Zin and two of our absolute favorites are Hook & Ladder from the Russian River AVA and Edict from the Sierra Foothills.



## WHAT'S INSIDE

- Zinfandel: The Perfect BBQ Wine Page 1
- It's Crush Time Pages 2-3
- Blackberry Wine Spritzer Page 3
- Spotlight On: Eastern Washington Wines Page 4
- PET Bottles - The Future of Wine Packaging Page 5
- ReWINEd Crafts Page 6



## IT'S CRUSH TIME!

**F**or winemakers, “crunch time” is really CRUSH time- the culminating moments of finally harvesting the grapes that have been painstakingly tended to for much of the year. North of the equator, harvest usually happens between August and November depending on the region and varietal. Deciding the exact moment to pick is an art and a science. Grapes like Tempranillo (whose name comes from the Spanish for “early”) ripen quickly, others, like Petit Verdot or grapes from cooler growing regions (like Germany), are harvested later in the season.

The date of harvest often varies from year to year and depends on factors like temperature and rainfall levels. During the time leading up to harvest, growers watch their grapes closely. As a grape ripens, its acidity levels drop, and its sugar levels increase. This sugar will be fermented and transformed into alcohol- the higher the sugar level, the higher the potential alcohol content in the final wine. Large scale growers will often monitor their grapes in the field and in the lab, taking samples to have their pH and Brix (sugar) levels tested frequently.

For red wines, the length of the ripening process is key to the eventual structure and body of the wine. As the grapes ripen, the skin darkens and the fruit notes intensify, lessening the vegetal characteristics of the final wine. The tannins, which are found in the skins, seeds and stems also soften during this time, altering the body of the red wine produced, making it more supple and pleasing. Growers are looking for the precise

moment that a grape is optimally ripe, like Goldilocks in field, the grapes must be just ripe, but not too ripe.

Ideally, growers would harvest based on these lab results alone, but they must also keep a close eye on the weather. A sudden heatwave, a freak hailstorm, or an early frost could obliterate a crop and ruin the harvest for the year. Pick too early, and tannins may be “green” or bitter. Pick too late and, along with the rising risk of Fall rain or hail destroying the crop, the sugar levels may get too high, resulting in a flabby, out of balance wine.



When the moment finally arrives, the grower will send out the call for workers to descend upon the vines to pick. In many areas, the entire vineyard is not harvested all at once. Depending on the slope, amount of sun and other factors, certain parcels may ripen more slowly. Hand-picking is the preferred method of harvesting because it is far gentler on the vines and grapes than the mechanical harvesting machinery seen at some large-scale manufacturers. Not only is it gentler, but human pickers can differentiate if a cluster is rotten or unripe and can choose to harvest only the best grapes. If the grape skins are accidentally broken during harvest, which is far more likely when heavy machinery does the picking, grapes can begin to prematurely ferment if they get too warm on the way from vineyard to winery, so many wineries elect to harvest during the night or at dawn, when it is coolest outside.



While you may imagine these grapes to be placed in a wood container to be traditionally foot-smashed, it's highly unlikely that your wine was processed this way. Modern wineries typically use large, automated crusher-destemmers, which break the skins open, exposing the juice and pulp, but without crushing the stems and seeds, which contain tannins (too much tannin makes wine bitter and astringent). Destemmers can remove stems before or after the grapes are crushed, depending on the winemaker's preference and the type of wine being made. The sooner in the process that the stems are removed, the fewer tannins the wine will ultimately have. Some winemakers want little-to-no influence of stems; others feel that "whole-cluster" fermentation gives the wine more character and structure.

White grapes may go through a crusher-destemmer first or go directly into a press, which separates the juice from the skins, so they don't contribute color or tannins.

With the whirlwind harvest complete, the job of crafting a beautiful wine is now in the hands of the winemaker to ferment, age and blend the wine into a final product.

## BLACKBERRY WINE SPRITZER

If your growing region is anything like ours in the Pacific Northwest, then you have an abundance of blackberries that are ready for picking. Whether you are buying from the grocery store or picking them in your garden or in the wild, blackberries make the perfect addition to a sparkling cocktail- they are sweet and tart and embody all the flavors of the end of Summer.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup of muddled (mashed) blackberries (if you don't like seeds, strain them out)
- 4 ounces of Chambord (raspberry liqueur)
- Ice
- Your favorite sparkling wine or Champagne- We recommend Divino Oro Sparkling Brut

### DIRECTIONS:

Smash the blackberries in a small bowl. We prefer to strain them to remove the seeds. Add ice cubes to four glasses. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of blackberry mash to each glass. Add an ounce of Chambord to each glass. Top with sparkling wine and a few whole blackberries. Cheers!



# SPOTLIGHT ON: EASTERN WASHINGTON WINES

When most people think of Washington State, they imagine the rain-drenched Evergreen trees of the Puget Sound around Seattle (not exactly grape vine growing weather), but Eastern Washington's climate and terrain are vastly different and more closely resemble the dry and sunny hills of Tuscany than the stereotypically wet image of the Pacific Northwest. As soon as you drive over the Cascade mountains, which provide a natural rain break, you enter what feels like an entirely different state. Massive valleys carved by Ice Age glaciers are home to wide, powerful rivers that provide the perfect irrigation for the arid landscape and allows the east side of the state to have a bountiful agricultural industry.

The Washington Wine region contains the first AVA (American Viticultural Area) - Yakima Valley AVA, which originated in 1983. Now, the over 240 wineries in Washington Wine Country include grapes from the regional AVA's of Columbia Valley, Walla Walla Valley, Yakima Valley, Red Mountain, Rattlesnake Hills, Horse Heaven Hills, Snipes Mountain and Naches Heights.

So, what makes Washington Wine country different? Sheer size, for sure. The growing region is massive and so are the individual vineyards (you can drive for miles and still be in the same vineyard), making Washington the second largest wine producing state in the US. The types of blends also set Eastern Washington wines apart. The red blends in the area are often referred to as "Bordeaux Style"



and use a base of Cabernet or Merlot and are often blended with Syrah and Malbec, which is rare outside the region. Altitude is another key difference. It provides an acidity that isn't found in every growing region, making Riesling a particularly popular grape to grow.



One of our favorite Eastern Washington wineries at Splash is Empyrean. Empyrean's Eridanus is the perfect example of what makes Eastern Washington wines so special with a bold Bordeaux-style blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc, with grapes sourced from outstanding vineyards in the Yakima Valley AVA and Columbia Valley AVA. Eridanus is balanced and approachable, with masses of dark fruits, notes of cigar box, black plum and dark chocolate on the palate. Fine, soft tannins provide structure throughout. Perfectly aged and balanced.

If you are wanting to explore wine country but want an entirely different experience from Napa and the California growing regions, consider a trip to Eastern Washington, particularly Walla Walla and the Yakima Valley.

# PET Bottles

## The Future of Wine Packaging

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Glass may seem like the classic choice for storing wine but has only been used since the 17th century. Prior to the widespread manufacturing of glass, wine was stored in barrels and clay amphoras. PET (polyethylene terephthalate), a form of plastic in the polyester family, is the newest revolution in wine.

### Benefits of PET:

- **1/8 THE WEIGHT OF GLASS** (making shipping far more affordable and environmentally friendly).
- **FDA APPROVED** for over 30 years and does not leach chemicals (like phthalates or BPA) like other plastics.
- **SMALLER CARBON FOOTPRINT:** 39% of the carbon footprint of a traditional bottle of wine comes from manufacturing the glass bottle.
- While PET does allow slightly more oxygen into the wine than glass, the PET has **NO AFFECT ON THE WINE** unless celled for years at a time. Keep the glass for long-term, cellar wines and make the easy switch to PET!
- **NEARLY UNBREAKABLE** compared to glass, making them safer and easier to transport.
- **100% RECYCLABLE.**
- Creating a virgin (not from recycled plastics) PET bottle produces **77% LESS GREENHOUSE GAS** than a glass bottle.



# JUST A SPLASH



## ReWINEd CRAFT

### CORK SHADOW BOX

This Summer, we have been saving up our corks for a very special craft to be featured in our Holiday newsletter. Instead of saving them in a bowl or a bag stuffed in the back of the pantry, we decided to make the task of saving a little more adorable and decorative.

### MATERIALS:

- Shadow box (we ordered ours from Amazon for \$18)
- Something to personalize the front- Precut vinyl phrase stickers (we have a Cricut cutting machine that we used to make ours), a photo, etc.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Simply adhere your décor to glass and start saving those corks!



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