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12 Outstanding California Zinfandels

New reviews of highly rated reds, most from the 2010 vintage

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

Fluctuating temperatures, fog and a deluge of rain during the growing season contributed to a challenging 2010 vintage for California Zinfandel producers. But as this week's new-release Zinfandels prove, many winemakers were able to make outstanding wines in 2010. (You'll notice two late-arriving 2009s and an early 2011 in the mix, too.)

Two things stand out about this lineup: The wines are generally loaded with ripe fruit, and they are backed by substantial tannins and bracing acidity.

Some of the best names in Zin are included in the group, including Turley, Carlisle and Robert Biale, as well as newer producers such as Bedrock and Kokomo. Maple Vineyard is one of the oldest and best in Dry Creek Valley, and the Mazzocco 2010 captures the site beautifully. Bacigalupi, in Russian River Valley, is another highly regarded Sonoma County vineyard, and Williams Selyem puts it to good use in the 2010.

In Napa, Turley works its usual magic with the historic Hayne Vineyard, and while Stagecoach Vineyard may not be as old as Hayne, it has quickly established itself as a premier source for Zin, as Robert Biale aptly demonstrated in 2010.

BEDROCK Dolinsek Ranch Heritage Russian River Valley 2011

Score: 91 | \$37

Dense and focused, balancing intense boysenberry and licorice fruit against a strong backbone of acid and tannins. Accents of mineral, white pepper and sage add to the package. Needs time. Best from 2014 through 2020. 150 cases made. —*T.F.*

CARLISLE Zinfandel Russian River Valley Martinelli Road Vineyard 2010

Score: 91 | \$45

A dark and brooding Zin that blends power with structure. Aromas of blueberry and raspberry mix with licorice, leading to dense but layered flavors of mineral, white pepper and herb. The tannins are big but ripe. Hands off for now. Best from 2014 through 2020. 280 cases made. —*T.F.*

COLLIER FALLS Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Private Reserve 2009

Score: 91 | \$34

Ripe and zesty, offering great focus and structure, with black raspberry and licorice aromas matched to plush cherry, toasted vanilla and pepper flavors. Drink now through 2018. 170 cases made. —*T.F.*

FRANK FAMILY Zinfandel Napa Valley 2010 **Score: 91 | \$37**



Steve Lumpkin/Under Prairie Skies

The Stagecoach vineyard, in Napa Valley, is a premier source of Zinfandel.

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Ripe and focused, with boysenberry and toffee aromas, offering layered huckleberry, pepper and fresh sage flavors. The tannins sneak in on the finish. Drink now through 2018. 5,114 cases made. —*T.F.*

KOKOMO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Timber Crest Vineyard 2010

Score: 91 | \$32

Big, ripe and well-structured, with aromas of black cherry leading to jammy yet focused raspberry, briary anise and smoke flavors. Drink now through 2018. 217 cases made. —*T.F.*

MAZZOCCO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Maple 2010 Score: 91 | \$42

Bold and loaded with flavors, all focused by a core of good acidity. Aromas of wild berry and spicy vanilla lead to jammy flavors of raspberry, licorice and clove. Drink now through 2019. 500 cases made. —*T.F.*

MAZZOCCO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Pony Reserve 2010 Score: 91 | \$52

A bold Zin with lots of personality, offering smoky black cherry aromas and rich, zesty plum, licorice and spicy cinnamon flavors. Drink now through 2018. 225 cases made. —*T.F.*

SARACINA Atrea Old Soul Red Mendocino County 2009 Score: 91 | \$24

Jammy and appealingly briary, with raspberry and fresh sassafras aromas, offering zesty black cherry jam and spice notes that finish with ripe tannins. Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Syrah and Malbec. Drink now through 2018. 1,562 cases made. —*T.F.*

TURLEY Zinfandel Napa Valley Hayne Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$75

An excellent Zin in a difficult vintage. Lacks plushness but remains focused, with bright tannins and acidity. This is jammed with dense boysenberry, rosemary and licorice flavors and aromatic black cherry and cracked pepper aromas. Best from 2014 through 2020. 500 cases made. —*T.F.*

ROBERT BIALE Zinfandel Napa Valley Stagecoach Vineyard The Biale Block 2010 Score: 90 | \$45

An admirable Zin in a tough year, offering appealing black cherry and minerally herb aromas, with a backbone of ripe fruit, balanced tannins and good acidity. The zesty flavors show plum, licorice and sage. Drink now through 2018. 273 cases made. —*T.F.*

WILLIAMS SELYEM Zinfandel Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2010 Score: 90 | \$50

Briary and well-structured, with blueberry and spicy oak aromas accenting jammy raspberry and licorice flavors, lingering on the finish. Drink now through 2017. 188 cases made. —*T.F.*

WILSON Zinfandel Alexander Valley Bramble Creek 2010 Score: 90 | \$36

Rich and jammy, showing underlying good structure. Aromas of black cherry and toasted caramel lead to succulent, ripe flavors of plum jam, anise and sage. Drink now through 2017. 298 cases made. —*T.F.*

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