

10 Plush California Zinfandels

New reviews of reds from Sonoma, Paso Robles and the Sierra Foothills



The historic Sebastiani estate made a spicy Zin in 2014 from their vineyards in Sonoma County.

Tim Fish

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

With grilling season on the horizon, we're entering prime Zinfandel time. Perhaps no California red is more versatile for an old-fashioned American cookout, complementing everything from hamburgers and hot dogs to steaks and barbecued chicken.

This week's collection of new-release Zins shows off the varied styles of the Golden State's heritage wine grape. Winemaker Erik Miller grew up in Indiana and named his Healdsburg winery after his hometown, Kokomo. Two of his Zinfandels make this week's list.

Martinelli has become best-known for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Sonoma Coast, but Zin has always been at the heart of this family-owned winery. The Russian River Valley Vigneto di Evo is a fine example of their bold, ripe style.

The 2014 and 2015 vintages are excellent for Zin. I'll keep tasting them, and you keep drinking them.

KOKOMO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley Pauline's Vineyard 2015 Score: 90 | \$36

Briary and ripe, with baked cherry and spicy cinnamon aromas and plum, black raspberry, black pepper and dark licorice flavors. Drink now through 2024. 350 cases made.—T.F.

MARTINELLI Zinfandel Russian River Valley Vigneto di Evo 2014 Score: 90 | \$30

Plump and quite jammy, with floral raspberry and sage aromas and supple, ripe cherry, toasty vanilla and spice flavors. Well made for the style. Drink now through 2022. 624 cases made.—T.F.

PIANETTA Zinfandel Paso Robles 2014 Score: 90 | \$34

Sleek and well made, with raspberry and stony mineral aromas and flavors, accented by smoky fennel and fresh pepper hints. Drink now through 2023. 185 cases made.—T.F.

SEBASTIANI Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley 2014 Score: 90 | \$36

Pretty raspberry and violet aromas open to sleek, well-built flavors of cherry, [i]garrigue[n] and spice. Drink now through 2024. 450 cases made.—T.F.

T-VINE Zinfandel Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2015 Score: 90 | \$40

Lively and well-built, with blueberry, sage and crushed stone aromas and zesty raspberry, toffee and spice flavors. Drink now through 2023. 286 cases made.—T.F.

KOKOMO Zinfandel Dry Creek Valley 2015 Score: 89 | \$28

Though young and a bit brooding, this bursts with bold black raspberry fruit, offering accents of licorice and toasted pepper. Drink now through 2024. 280 cases made.—*T.F.*

RUDIUS Bedrock Vineyard Sonoma Valley 2014 Score: 89 | \$38

Distinctive raspberry, licorice and smoky beef aromas combine with well-built wild berry and peppered herb flavors. A field blend of Zinfandel and other grapes. Drink now through 2026. 90 cases made.—*T.F.*

DASHE The Comet Sonoma County 2014 Score: 88 | \$35

Precise and balanced, with floral raspberry and tomato leaf aromas and sleek cherry, dill and pepper flavors. Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Carignane. Drink now through 2021. 324 cases made.—*T.F.*

ENKIDU Zinfandel Sonoma Valley Bedrock Vineyard 2015 Score: 88 | \$38

Quite ripe and jammy but retains focus, offering blackberry, grilled anise and pepper flavors. Drink now through 2022. 125 cases made.—*T.F.*

CHACEWATER Highlander Sierra Foothills 2014 Score: 87 | \$25

Zesty and loaded with spice, this has medium-bodied raspberry, smoky pepper and anise flavors. Finishes with dry tannins. Zinfandel, Syrah and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2022. 486 cases made.—*T.F.*

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