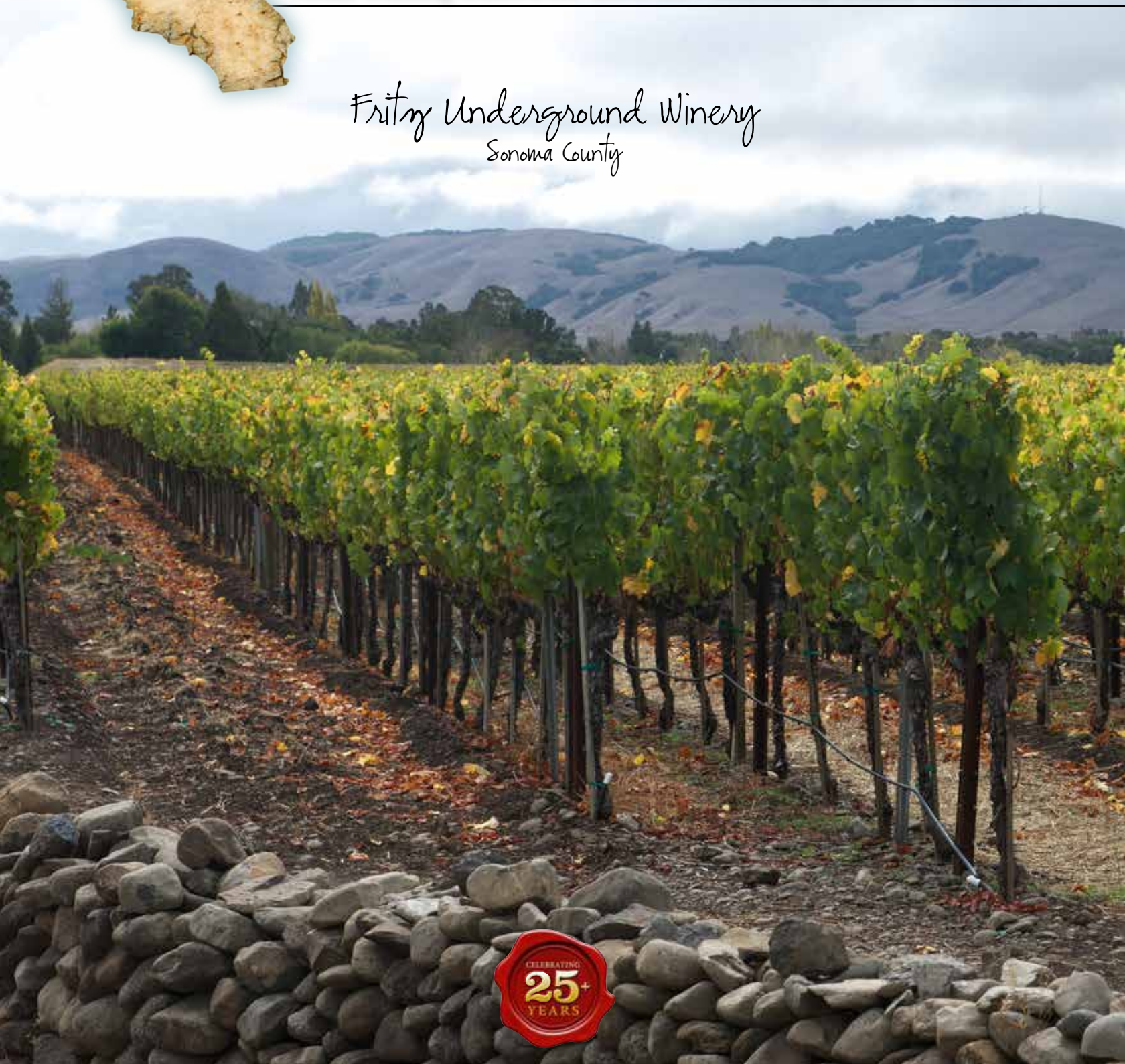




The Wine Press

Medal Winning Wines from California's Best Family-Owned Wineries.

Fritzy Underground Winery
Sonoma County





Fritz 2016 Estate Zinfandel

Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County, California

1,500 Cases Produced

The Fritz 2016 Estate Zinfandel is a blend of fruit grown on the winery's estate vineyard, nestled in the hills of Dry Creek Valley in Sonoma County. This well-structured, full-bodied wine opens with aromas of black currant, red cherry, dried cranberries and subtle notes of tobacco and dark chocolate. On the palate, flavors of plum, black currant, raspberry and cocoa are supported by bright acidity and firm tannins that carry through on the delightful finish. Try pairing the Fritz 2016 Estate Zinfandel with Pasta Bolognese (see recipe on page 5). Aged 10 months in oak. 100% Zinfandel. Enjoy!

Gold Medal Special Selection



Fritz 2017 Chardonnay

Russian River Valley, Sonoma County, California

800 Cases Produced

The Fritz 2017 Chardonnay comes from the famed Russian River Valley, one of the state's coolest and foggiest AVA's that is particularly well known for its premium Chardonnays that are beautifully balanced and incredibly complex. Pale golden in color, this enticing Chardonnay contains a tantalizing array of aromas with notes of green apple, citrus blossom, pear and vanilla bean. The palate is rich, creamy and silky with bright acidity and mouth-filling flavors of apricot, baked pear and citrus that linger on the finish. Try pairing this wine with seafood, chicken, or even a chilled pea soup (see recipe on page 5). Aged 10 months in oak. 100% Chardonnay. Enjoy!

Gold Medal Special Selection

HOW WE CHOOSE OUR WINES: Gold Medal Wine Club showcases two wines each month from only the best small wineries of California. Featured wines include those which have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by a respected national wine publication (see goldmedalwineclub.com/resources/wine-ratings). On occasion, we feature a pair of wines which are newly released by the winery and which medals and reviews are forthcoming. Each and every selection is a superb wine made in small quantities and with very limited distribution. There are over 3,000 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



Fritz Underground Winery



A feast for the senses, Fritz Underground Winery offers an incredibly unique winery setting, in addition to a collection of award-winning wines from some of the most famous and reputable wine growing regions Sonoma County has to offer.



In the late 1970's, Fritz Underground Winery's winemaking facility was built into the side of a picturesque hill atop the northernmost region of Dry Creek Valley. Its naturally cool temperatures and three-tiered gravity-flow winery system help preserve the delicate nuances present in the prized fruit destined for the Fritz portfolio of wines.

The fact that Fritz Underground Winery is the correct name for this month's Gold Wine Club selection tells you right off that there is something unique about this Sonoma County business. But, there is a great deal more to the story than an appealing name.

Fritz Underground Winery traces its roots back to 1971, when founders Jay and Barbara Fritz sought a weekend retreat for their growing family. Fritz's business was international shipping and customs work and was located in San Francisco. He traveled extensively abroad and the thought of a bucolic setting when he returned from those trips seemed attractive. Sonoma County's famous Dry Creek Valley beckoned and a suitable piece of land was found on which to plant grapes.

Initially, the grapes were sold to other wineries. In 1979, Jay Fritz decided to enter the winery side of the business and Fritz Winery was born with an opening release of somewhere around 3,000 cases.

Jay Fritz was also a visionary, one of the more significant to inhabit Sonoma County in quite some time. He envisioned

his property as a green space environment before green space became a worldwide crusade. He carefully studied his property, then chose an acceptable location on which to build the winery. The spot he chose was directly above what had become Fritz's prized Zinfandel vineyard, the center piece of his viticultural efforts. First, the location was excavated (two stories worth) with the idea of reusing the dirt after the winery was built. The cool, subterranean excavation became the cellar and aging space for the new winery. The dirt was then moved to the top of the winery, effectively making it an underground winery.

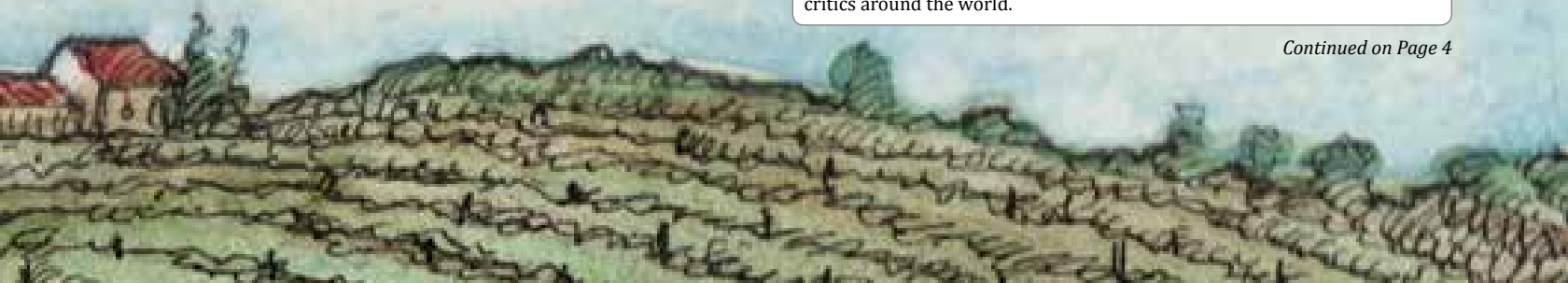
For the outside, Jay Fritz chose the work of 19th Century Catalan architect Antoni Gaudi as his inspiration. Imposing, rounded windows dominate the site, offering a marvelous commune with nature and a living testament to the importance of the grape.

Due to its unique nature, Fritz Underground Winery employs a full gravity-flow process for its winemaking. Such a process is quite beneficial to the pressed juice and keeps oxidation down to a minimum and helps the aromatic aspects of the wine. The process helps promote fullness in the wines and provides some lingering aspects to their finish.



Proprietor Clay Fritz and winemaker Brad Longton share a respect for the vineyards as well as a passion for sustainability, quality and upholding the traditions of artisan, handcrafted winemaking - and the results speak for themselves! Fritz wines have earned praise from wine enthusiasts and critics around the world.

Continued on Page 4





Brad Longton, Winemaker

A number of things about winemaker Brad Longton make him unique among California’s relatively tight brotherhood of winemakers. First of all, he’s Australian. He hails from Perth in Western Australia, and has been in the United States (off and on) for the past two decades. Longton is also a vegetarian, somewhat unusual for a livelihood that often depends on matching wine flavors with specific foods, quite often meat-oriented dishes.

Brad is also a self-taught winemaker, one who has learned on the job through the school of hard knocks and hard work. He is fortunate to have been tutored by one of the true heavyweights in the wine business, namely the iconic Heitz Cellar (and its stellar Martha’s Vineyard) where he worked for more than four years. Tall and athletic, he also enjoys basketball and his young family. He considers himself to possess a soft hand with his winemaking, a factor that is evident throughout the entire Fritz portfolio of wines.

Fritz Underground Winery

Continued from Page 3

Today, Fritz Underground Winery produces around 8,000 cases, down from as high a number as 30,000 in its past. Jay and Barbara Fritz’s son, Clayton (Clay) has followed his parents into the winery business and runs the day to day business of the winery.

“When I took over the winery from my parents,” he explained, “there were a number of important decisions to be made. We were either going to expand a great deal and become a large winery, or consolidate some areas and make ourselves smaller.”

Clay Fritz chose the latter route and slowly decreased production to its present levels. He stated that he now feels comfortable in making superior wines that have “certain handcrafted features that appeal to our customers.”

Considering the fact that Fritz Underground winery has been around more than three decades, its reemergence and excellent price/value ratio is exceedingly good for the wine industry. Throw in the fact that Fritz Underground Winery has garnered an impressive list of awards and kudos for its portfolio of fine wines, the ultimate winner in all this is the faithful consumer.

We applaud Fritz Underground Winery for its innovative nature and for its long-term production of really good wines. Would that there were more wineries around that could follow Fritz’s lead and downsize in order to produce better, less expensive wines. We would all be the better for such actions.





Food pairings from Fritz Underground Winery



Natalia's Bolognese

Pair with the Fritz 2016 Estate Zinfandel

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 2 Tbs olive oil | 28 oz can crushed tomatoes |
| 1 1/2 lbs ground sirloin | 2 Tbs tomato paste |
| 4 garlic cloves, mined | 1 lb dried pasta, such as orecchiette |
| 1 cup chopped button mushrooms | 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg |
| 1/2 cup pitted & chopped Kalamata olives | 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil |
| 1/4 tsp ground oregano | 1/4 cup heavy cream |
| 1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes | 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan |
| 1 1/4 cups red wine (divided) | (plus extra for serving!) |

In a large skillet (12-inch), over medium-high heat, heat 2 Tbs of olive oil. Add the ground sirloin, breaking up with a wooden spoon as it cooks. Once the meat has begun to brown (about 7 minutes), add the garlic, mushrooms, red pepper flakes and oregano. Stir to combine and let cook for 2 minutes. Your kitchen becomes very fragrant right about now. . . then add 1 cup of the red wine, scraping the bottom of the pan to release any bits. Add the tomatoes, tomato paste and 1 tsp of Kosher salt, 1/2 tsp of freshly ground pepper. Stir until combined. Allow the sauce to come to a boil, then lower the heat for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, follow the directions on the pasta to cook the pasta. If you are cooking orecchiette, I recommend adding a splash of oil to the water once it comes to a boil, before you add the pasta. This will help keep the little pastas from sticking to each other. Normally, I never add oil to water for pasta, but this shape can easily cling to each other, and we don't want that.

As the pasta cooks, you will finish your sauce. Now add the nutmeg, basil and cream, as well as the remaining wine. Simmer for 8-10 minutes, stirring every couple minutes. Resist the urge to sample it by the spoonful. Once the pasta is cooked, drain and pour it into a large serving bowl. Add as much as you prefer, and the remaining Parmesan, and toss well. Serve hot. *Recipe provided by Natalia Fritz of Fritz Underground Winery.*

P.S. This recipe yields more sauce than 1 lb of pasta needs, so the leftovers are terrific over grilled, toasted or broiled sourdough bread, or over hot creamy polenta.



Chilled Pea Soup with Mint

Pair with the Fritz 2017 Chardonnay

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 Tbs unsalted butter | 1 Tbs sour cream, Greek yogurt or creme fraiche |
| 2 shallots, minced | Grated zest of 1 lemon |
| 3 cups chicken broth | Olive oil for drizzling |
| 3 cups shelled English peas (or frozen) | |
| 1/2 cup fresh chopped mint | |

In a large, heavy pot over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add the shallots and cook until they are soft and fragrant. I sprinkle Kosher salt over them. Cook them for about 5 minutes. Add the broth and bring to a boil. Add the peas (set a few aside for garnish) and cook until they are tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in the chopped mint. Remove from the heat and let cool.

Working in batches, puree the soup in a blender or food processor. Return to the pot and stir in the sour cream, yogurt or creme fraiche. Remove from heat and stir in the lemon zest. Season with salt and pepper. I allow it to cool to room temperature before I set it in the refrigerator to chill completely - a few hours or overnight. When you serve the soup, drizzle about a teaspoon of olive oil over the top. *Recipe provided by Natalia Fritz of Fritz Underground Winery.*





Clay Fritz, In The Spotlight

Clayton (Clay) Fritz is only 46 years old, but, by his own account, the personable owner of Fritz Underground Winery has already stacked a great deal of living into those four and a half decades. He is of French/Swiss ancestry and his family originally emigrated from Alsace in the 1930's.

When he was called on to run the family winery (Fritz) more than ten years ago, he realized the decision would shape the remainder of his life.

"When I took over the winery from my parents, I knew it would require a great commitment and I was prepared for all eventualities," he began. "Mom and Dad had done a great job up to that point, but I saw that some changes were needed in order for us to go forward. I was given the chance to do things my way, and fortunately, it has all worked out for the best."

A fourth generation San Franciscan, Clay Fritz graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA with a degree in religion and philosophy.

"My degree didn't exactly prepare me for the wine business," Fritz confessed. "But my 30th birthday came and my parents wanted to pass on the winery to someone. That someone turned out to be me. My dad always said that Fritz Winery should be run by a Fritz, and I agreed with his way of thinking."

Clay Fritz's intention was to reinvigorate the winery and scale it to a position that would invite additional national exposure.

"We had always been very popular around Sonoma and in California," he explained further. "But, we had never really concentrated on the rest of the country. I wanted to make artisan-style wines that people could easily identify with and then position them at a price level that everyone could afford. That might sound simple to do, but in truth, it isn't all that easy to accomplish."

In addition to maintaining the prized Zinfandel and Sauvignon Blanc from the Dry Creek Valley estate property,

under the Fritz brand, Clay also made the decision to continue buying fruit from other sources in surrounding Sonoma County.



"We have had a long-term relationship with a number of top growers around here," Fritz continued. "People like the Dutton Family who own some of the best vineyards in Sonoma, if not all of California. I strove to reinforce our relationship with many of these families and was able to begin producing wines with distinctive personalities. This led to more awards and higher scores from the winery that ultimately benefited what we were attempting to achieve."

Fritz is extremely proud of his Estate Zinfandel, that has always been a consumer favorite. But he also turns to some of his lesser-known wines as his greatest achievements.

"To me, making a truly hand-crafted wine is a work of art. If you can achieve elegance in the bottle with it costing a fortune, you have something special," Fritz concluded.

Clay Fritz himself is something special, in a relaxed sort of way. He is a person that has taken what he was given and made the best of it, not matter the circumstances. He is a strong believer in family and the proper way of doing business and this has aided Fritz Underground Winery's reemergence into the top echelons of California wineries.





Wine Region: Sonoma County

Most wine growers will agree that Sonoma County is one of the most diverse grape growing regions in the world. Situated between the Pacific Ocean and Napa Valley, and north of San Pablo Bay, Sonoma County is home to 17 unique AVA's with more than 60 wine grape varieties planted across

the sprawling region. As Master Sommelier, Keith Goldston, puts it, "Sonoma County is an incredible spot to make many different styles of wines - it's almost like a whole country in one county."

One of the factors that leads to Sonoma's diversity is its unique geographical setting - from valleys, plains, and mountaintops, to forests, riverbeds, and ocean cliffs - Sonoma offers a bit of everything to adventurous wine grape growers. The area's soil structure is defined by a rare combination of ash and lava, and in addition to this, Sonoma is also home to more soil types than are found in all of France. This creates a unique combination of soil and geographic rarities unlike any other region in the world.



Sonoma County is also heavily influenced by its close proximity to the ocean, and its cool nights and temperate days create the perfect conditions to draw in layers of oceanic fog to cool the warmer inland valleys. The fog is perfectly channeled through the region by way of the Russian River.

With such variations in the geography and climate, Sonoma is home to nearly an infinite array of microclimates that gives wine grape growers an exciting and inspiring landscape to work with. Sonoma's wines enjoy global recognition and have won countless national and international awards.

It is no wonder that wineries such as Fritz Underground Winery have chosen to showcase the Sonoma County region in their portfolio of wines. It is truly a land of unlimited potential for grape growing and winemaking.

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This month's *Gold Club* featured *Plus!* wine:
Praxis 2015 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast

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360 Cases Produced

Retail Price at the Winery: \$25.00



Wine Winyard: Test Your Wine IQ!



Who introduced the 100 Point wine rating scale?

Most novices, enthusiasts, and wine aficionados are familiar with the standard 100-Point scale used today to rate the quality of a wine. The 100-Point scale is common place in national wine publications and is utilized at numerous wine competitions across the country. This rating system was developed and first implemented by one of the most internationally recognized and respected wine advocates, Robert Parker. As a fledging wine critic and writer in the early 1980s, Robert Parker decided to attach a score to every wine he tasted, judged and reviewed. He based his scoring system on the grading scale from his earlier days in school. Initially, most wine writers and publications scorned Parker for trivializing wine, although, within a few years, they were all using Robert Parker's 100 Point scale. The Wine Advocate, Wine Spectator, Wine Enthusiast, Vinous and Wine & Spirits are among the highly respected wine publications that publish ratings based on Robert Parker's 100 Point scale.

When did winemaking begin?

The oldest archaeological evidence of winemaking was found at an 8,000 year-old village in the nation of Georgia. Here, about twenty miles south of Tbilisi, Georgia, is a mound called 'Gadachrili Gora,' and the people who lived here were the world's earliest known vintners, producing wines as early as 6,000 B.C. This was at a time when prehistoric humans were still reliant on stone and bone tools! The archaeological studies here revealed clay pots with grape decorations and residues of some of the world's oldest wine.

The Gold Medal Wine Store



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FRITZ	Retail Price at Winery		Gold Medal Membership Rewards Pricing*		
			2+ btls.	6+ btls.	12+ btls.
2016 Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County	\$25.00/btl.	2-Bottle Members:	\$20.00	\$18.33	\$17.50
		4-Bottle Members:	\$20.00	\$17.50	\$16.25
2017 Chardonnay Russian River Valley, Sonoma County	\$30.00/btl.	2-Bottle Members:	\$24.00	\$22.33	\$21.50
		4-Bottle Members:	\$24.00	\$21.50	\$20.25

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