

SPIRITS

Heavenly Hendry

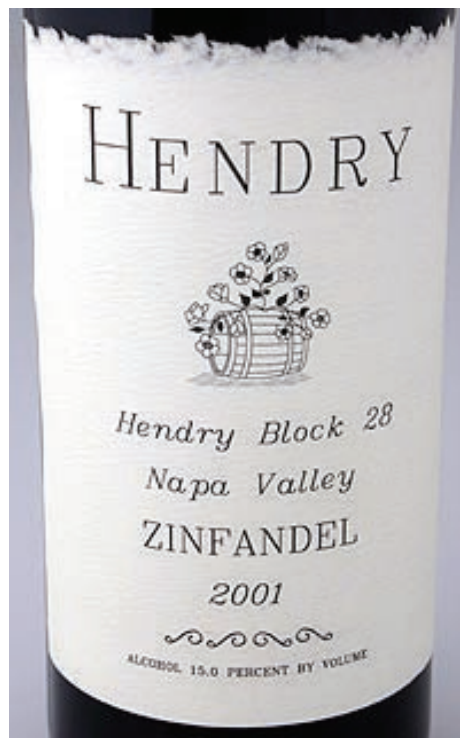
BY CLIFF SHULTZ

MAN, DO WE LIKE ZINFANDEL! There are few wines that pair with tomato-based pasta dishes, cheeses, or pizza with such gusto. No wonder California recently declared Zinfandel their official state wine. Not bad for a humble little grape from Croatia. Recently, I had the pleasure (again) of sampling the Zins of Napa Valley's **Hendry Vineyards**.

This award-winning, much-emulated vineyard made its bones with rich Zinfandels but has since branched out into other varietals. The occasion was a wine dinner hosted by Hendry Vineyard Representative **Susan Ridley** at **Todd Jurich's Bistro in downtown Norfolk**. Eight superb courses were accompanied by five of Hendry's best bottled offerings—great stuff produced by a vineyard that almost didn't happen.

In 1939, George & Margaret Hendry purchased a ranch in Napa Valley complete with an old Zinfandel vineyard. There, they happily raised their two sons, George and Andy. They also raised prunes and Zinfandel grapes that were sold to the nearby Christian Brothers Vineyard. With George Sr.'s unexpected death, Margaret worked the ranch alone with the boys and managed to make ends meet. The boys grew up, and Andy departed for Canada where he took a job with the government of British Columbia. George attended Berkeley, earning several degrees, worked as a cyclotron physicist and did a tour in the Navy. After his hitch was up, George returned to the Ranch and decided to turn the Ranch's cattle pasture into a Zinfandel Vineyard.

By trial and error (the man is a scientist, after all), George successfully raised Zinfandel at precisely the moment the bottom of the Zinfandel grape market fell out. George, undaunted, shifted to other varietals until the Zin market came back. His scientific training showed in the methodical way the vineyards were laid out to take advantage of sun, drainage, elevation and other factors to produce exceptional



Zinfandels, with their first release in 1995. The rest, is history, with Hendry Zinfandels taking almost every major award in almost every competition they entered. In 2001, George built the Hendry Winery on the ranch. A modern facility that allows George to continue his passion for making great wines. But, George hasn't confined his attentions strictly to Zinfandel, there are other "blocks" of Hendry *terroir* dedicated to other grapes. I had a chance to sample these other varietals at Bistro, and here are my impressions:

Hendry Rose 2006 A bright, crisp blend of Primitivo and Cabernet Sauvignon. Faint strawberries on the nose with a clean and refreshing finish. I liked it so much, I bought four bottles to help me while away warm & lazy summer afternoons. Not that I need much help.

Hendry Chardonnay Barrel Fermented 2004 Regular readers of this column know I have a problem with oaky Chards. I believe all that oakiness hides the true flavor of the Chardonnay. However, the Hendry Chardonnay was so lightly oaked, it did not offend. Besides, I had a sample of the Hendry Steel Chardonnay and I found that much more to my liking. No splintery oak between the brightness of the fruit and my picky palate. If you can find this Steel stuff, buy it.

Hendry Pinot Noir 2005 So good, I almost forgot how great their Zinfandel was. Soft, highly drinkable, a fine companion to grilled meats, fish or cheese. But, it drank just fine on

IT'S OFFICIAL:
Zinfandel is now California's state wine—and Hendry's are the winners.

its own. Three bottles of this came home to my cellar. Two of these bottles were destined to become gifts for friends. I may have to reconsider the value of those friendships.

Hendry Red Meritage 2004 Rich and deep. Dark fruits, like the prunes that once grew on the ranch. Needed a little time to open up, but did an excellent job of chasing the Chateaubriand and the roast Rack of Lamb down the little red lane.

Hendry Zinfandel Block 28 2003 This Zin married beautifully with the chocolate espresso Risotto. A Zin as a dessert wine? When it's this good, Hell, yes. Warm and soft, slightly spicy with overtones of dates. I wonder if Arnold had tasted this stuff before he declared Zinfandel to be California's official wine? *Hasta la vista, bottle!*

I am a big fan of George's wines. Try them, and you will be too. Check out their website at www.hendrywines.com or stop by the vineyard next time you're in Napa and pay them a visit at 3104 Redwood Road. And take me with you. ●

HEARD THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

Medik's Market (702 Mariner's Row, Suite 104, Newport News, 596-8651) has a busy month's worth of activities planned. Stop by on Saturday, June 16 from 2-7 p.m. and check out the **Mud**

and Metal Festival featuring sculpture and pottery of local artists. Oh, yeah, don't forget to pick some wines or beers while you're there. On Thursday, June 19, from 5-7 p.m. a complimentary tasting of **Ferrari-Carano** wines (complimentary means free, usually). Lotsa other wine-tasting going on there this month. Go already. Ladies, on June 25, **J'adore** at **Lesner Inn, VB** will be sponsoring "**Martinis and Makeovers**" along with **Associated Distributors**. A charity event fashion runway show. Not much to my tastes, or any man's tastes, really. Unless that man happens to be John Edwards. \$1 from each ticket goes to the Relay for Life Organization. Limited seating so call 227-6363 soon for info.

On Thursday, June 21, **Cobalt Grille** (762 Hilltop North, Virginia Beach) will host "**A Tour of Italy**" wine dinner with Italian wines presented by **Alex Carr** of **Robbins Cellars**. Six courses and five wines. Reception at 6:45 and seating at 7 p.m., \$65 per non-inclusive. Call 333-3334 for reservations. Fans of Norfolk's **Winehouse** (626 W. Olney Rd. 622-7777) can rest easy, the big "For Sale" sign has come down. the building has changed hands, but the popular Wine bar will stay. Thanks Lindsey and Ed!

Like drinking? Like reading about drinking? Then I recommend a subscription to **Imbibe Magazine**, a new bi-monthly publication that covers wines, beers, liquors, soft drinks, coffees & teas. Just about anything liquid that you can imagine. An invaluable reference. To subscribe go to www.imbibemagazine.com or call 1-877-246-2423. Drink recipes, reviews, trends, it's all there for the informed dipsomaniac.

Moonrise Bay Winery will host its **Summer Wine Celebration** on June 21. Drive on down to Knotts Island, N.C. and visit with Kate & Oakie Morris for a spell. \$30 buys you entrance to the wine tasting from 12-5 p.m., live music by Julie Clark, heavy noshes, and a souvenir wine glass. Check www.moonrisebaywine.com for details and reservations. Groups welcome.

Got a question? Comment to share? Opinion to share? Recipe to share? Embarrassing Secret to share? Nude pictures of your girlfriend or your hot mom to share? Then share it at liquorlizard@hotmail.com. I like sharing.

