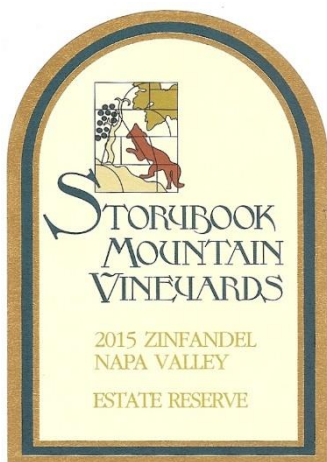


YEAR'S BEST ZINFANDELS

JUNE 2019

Wine & Spirits



96 | Storybook Mountain \$70

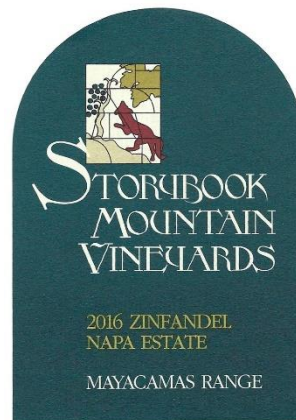
2015 Napa Valley Estate Reserve Zinfandel

Jerry Seps is the zin master of Napa Valley. And he's pretty Zen about it, accepting his fate as the grower of one of the world-famous region's most terroir-expressive wines, selling it for one-tenth the price of some big, juicy cabernets his neighbors grow down valley. I have to stop myself when I grumble that Château Latour is no longer \$150 on a wine list, or Roumier Chambolle-Musigny \$60; I can still buy Storybook Reserve. And if you've recently tasted one of Seps's Reserves from the 1980s, you'll understand the solace that brings. Great wines like Storybook Reserve are not only supple and delicious, they surround themselves in the scents of the place where they grow, and they preserve those scents with freshness. In this wine, it's the manzanita forest on this hill above the vineyard, the roses at the ends of the vine rows and the cool red glow of the ripening grapes. Elegant, frank and clear as a bell, this is a great vintage of Storybook Reserve. —J.G.

92 | Storybook Mountain \$55

2015 Napa Valley Eastern Exposures Zinfandel

Jerry Seps grows fragrant zin on the steep east-facing hillsides of his vineyard north of Calistoga. This vintage is full and soft in its tannins while the fruit lasts, with flavors of crunchy cherries and gentle notes of raspberry fruit leather. The structure and length seem to emanate from the wine's freshness rather than from its extract. Cellar it until you find yourself grilling lamb chops, then give it some time in a decanter to open up. (*W&S* 10/18) —J.G.



94 | Storybook Mountain \$40

2016 Napa Valley Mayacamas Range Zinfandel

While Eastern Exposures (also recommended here) may prove to be longer lived than the Mayacamas Range zin from 2016, this wine is more compellingly delicious right now. "I was happy this was in my mouth," said Jared Hooper of LA's *Faith & Flower* when he tasted it. Maria Garcia from the Wine House in Santa Monica described it as "pinot-noir-esque, with more of the weight I want in zinfandel." In fact, when our pourer, Lewis Hurrell, was griping to me about a ZAP tasting he'd attended, I suggested he taste this wine, along with another (the Storybook Reserve). "Those wines changed my mind about zinfandel," he told me later. So, if you don't think of zinfandel as lively, zesty and fresh, a sleekly fruited backdrop for the scent of a meadow in June, try this wine. I can't guarantee you'll like it, but I would wager that you will. —J.G.

93 | Storybook Mountain \$55

2016 Napa Valley Eastern Exposures Zinfandel

You can taste the cool morning sun in this wine. Set aside the ideal conditions for zinfandel—the red volcanic soils on a steep hillside facing northeast, and the care with which Jerry Seps selected the vines and tends them. Forget the crunchy apple and blueberry-skin briskness of the tannins, and the black-raspberry and blackberry richness of the fruit. And just consider that after tasting more than a hundred wines over the course of two days, this is where I wrote, "I want to drink this." —J.G.

