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# NorCal Wine Blog

## Lodi Zinfandel Goes Native

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**Lodi** is well-known for Zinfandel. Of particular note are its many acres of **old vines**. Thick-trunked and twisted after all these years, they look more like short trees than grape vines.

The fruit these centenarians bear is full of character, but their unique traits are sometimes masked by new oak and other winemaking choices intended to please contemporary wine lovers. So, unlike Pinot Noir vineyard-designates often made with a minimum of intervention to expose distinct terroir, even **super-premium Zinfandel wines don't necessarily reveal all the unique characteristics of particular old vine plots**. This makes it hard to know exactly how excited we should really be about those vineyards.

The Lodi Native project addresses that problem directly. It presents single-vineyards of distinction from Lodi's **Mokelumne River AVA** in wines that are skillfully made, but not "crafted." I tasted the project's first 6 wines. The differences between each were dramatic. The wines are beautiful. They compelled me to open my wallet, a much harder task these days than it used to be.



### What is Lodi Native?

Lodi Native is a serious effort by six winemakers to let heritage vineyards speak clearly through "sensible viticulture and minimalist winemaking". Each man was responsible for his own wine but also worked with the others from the outset to define a wine that would be a challenge and critical success in the marketplace and brand-styles in the region.

Here are some of the

- 100% Zinfandel from Mokelumne River AVA (except when a particular vineyard is designated)
- Native-yeast fermentation for primary and malolactic fermentation
- No new oak or inner staves
- No oak substitutes such as chips or powder
- No addition of water or subtraction of alcohol
- No addition or reduction of acid
- No added tannins
- No added color or concentrates, including Mega-Purple
- No fining or filtration
- No must concentration, Flash Détante or similar extraction measures

This was a risky project. The winemakers couldn't use commonly accepted measures to counteract issues with the grapes or production. Some winemakers hadn't relied solely on native fermentation before, so they didn't know what surprises the peculiar strains in their vineyard and winery would bring. There was no oak "spice box" to cover minor flaws.

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