



NOTES FROM THE WINERY

~ HARVEST 2008 ~

Featured Vintage

As autumn's brilliant spectacle debuts, so does our 2006 Dry Creek Valley Old Vine Zinfandel.

New Releases, Just in Time for the Holidays!

Looking for the perfect wines to accompany your holiday meals and celebrations? Stock up on our new releases while they're still available...

Crush 2008

Winemaker Margaret Davenport recalls an eventful season in the cellar.

Holiday Gift Ideas

We have several toast-worthy gifts for the wine lovers on your list.

Farmer's Corner

Harvest 2008 at T.R. Passalacqua Ranch yields fruit with beautiful colors and tremendously rich berry taste.

Postcard from France

Aimée Ocamou reports back on her recent visit to Taransaud Tonnellerie in Bordeaux, home of the beautiful, perfectly toasted barrels used for aging our Cabernets.

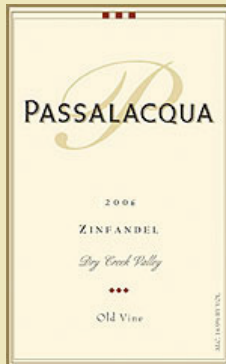
New in the Tasting Room: Cabernet and Zinfandel Flights

Come visit us and enjoy a new taste experience!

DON'T MISS THIS EVENT!

Thanksgiving Weekend Open House & Wine Club Pick-Up

Join us on Friday, November 28 from noon to 4 p.m. to herald the holiday season with festive food and wine by the fireside. If you're a *Passa il Vino* member, you may pick up your current selections and enjoy additional treats in the club area.



Featured Vintage: 2006 Dry Creek Valley Old Vine Zinfandel

Made from grapes grown on the western bench of Dry Creek Valley, this field blend shows fruit aromas of cherry and raspberry/blackberry with a bit of black pepper and green peppercorn. The subtle but unmistakable French toastiness comes at the finish, and the wine has a rich, heavy mouthfeel with elegant tannin structure. Along with the jammy fruit notes, the oak lends a bit of mocha to the long, savory finish.

"This Zin is a big, rich wine, with that Dry Creek Valley raspberry-peppery signature," says our winemaker Margaret Davenport. "2006 is a really good vintage, much like our gold-medal-winning Old Vine Zins from 2002 and 2004."

Passalacqua's 2006 Old Vine Zin is an ideal wine for harvest celebrations and cozy winter evenings. To purchase your share of this limited-production vintage, give us a call at 877-825-5547 or visit our [online wine shop](#). **\$29**

New Releases for Holiday Celebrations

Just in time for the holidays, we present four favorite limited-production wines for you to enjoy with family and friends.

Our **2006 Dry Creek Valley Estate Zinfandel** (\$36) is bursting with flavors of ripe raspberries, with smoky nuances of toast and oak. 358 cases of this wine were produced.

The **2006 Dry Creek Valley Maple Vineyard Zinfandel** (\$38) is here! Another wonderful vintage from Tom and Tina Maple's famous vineyard, this Zin is full of the signature Maple aroma of cherries, plums, raspberry and black pepper without being too jammy. 496 cases produced.

Just released, the **2005 Dry Creek Valley T.R. Passalacqua Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$42) is deeply colored and richly textured, showing flavors of blackberry and plum. 560 cases produced.

The **2005 Dry Creek Valley T.R. Passalacqua Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Blocks 18 & 19** (\$65) is our most elegant Cabernet, made to enhance the classic Cabernet benchmarks of cassis and dried black cherry fruit. Its marriage of fruit and oak flavors produce a full complement of spices including nutmeg, vanilla and cinnamon. 231 cases produced.

[Learn more about these wines](#) | [Purchase these wines](#)

We're getting very low on reserves of the rest of our Cabernets, so please note that per-purchase quantities are limited.



Winemaker's Notes: Crush 2008 with Margaret Davenport

This year's harvest was a little like 2007 in that it started early, thanks in part to some unusual weather during the growing season. In May we had a heat wave followed by cold weather, and before that in March and April, we had many freezing nights that led to complete crop losses in some vineyards and smaller yields in others. Luckily, none of our vineyards were affected.

All of this made it a little tricky to determine how soon fruit would be ripe and ready for harvest. During a normal year, we'd check the brix, and expecting the typical period of temperatures in the 90s, would know we had some time yet. This year, the vines had the usual amount of clusters, but they were lighter and smaller and got ripe a bit faster than usual, so we were picking more by taste than by brix. In red varieties, the accelerated ripening yielded delicious fruit with delicate skins that would almost melt in your mouth — amazing! We crushed five Zinfandels this year, and with the Maple Zin, we were actually the first to pick from Tom and Tina's dry-farmed vineyard. All of the Zinfandel fruit is truly amazing, with intense flavors already beginning to emerge.



*Allison, Rigo and Margaret
in the cellar*

The early arrival of Zinfandel gave us plenty of time before the Cab was ready, which worked out perfectly for ample tank space and time to cold soak the fruit from Blocks 18 and 19 of Passalacqua Ranch when it arrived (18 and 19 are often the first Cabs ready for harvest because of their location on the ranch). Along with our other favorite blocks at the ranch, this year we've also picked Block 20, one that's always been of interest to us. When we pressed that fruit, I was just amazed at how approachable it was for a young wine. Whether it's bottled on its own or part of our classic blend, it'll bring something different to the table and really show the diversity of the ranch.

Once again this year, the first fruit to be delivered to the winery was our Sauvignon Blanc, a beautiful Musqué clone from the Lyon Vineyard in Alexander Valley. In other arrivals, I've brought in some barrels from Taransaud's U.S.-based sister coopeage, Canton, which should lend elegant notes and structure to our Russian River Zinfandels.

One of the other great things about Crush 2008 was the contribution of our cellar intern, Allison Rowe, who just graduated from Colorado College with a degree in life science and emphases in ecology and pre-med studies. She did everything from lab work to cellar work, and her kind, positive presence was a great influence and an even greater help as the harvest came in. We wish her all the best in her upcoming adventures, and look forward to sharing the fruits of 2008 with all of you!

Holiday Gift Ideas from the heart of Dry Creek Valley

We have the perfect gift for all those wine lovers on your list: specially selected collections of our Cabernets or Zinfandels, packaged in beautiful keepsake Passalacqua wooden gift boxes. Those building a collection of fine wines and those who appreciate the opportunity to discern the distinctions that different years (Cabernet) or different vineyards (Zinfandel) bring to a wine will toast your selection. Just add a card for a unique taste of Dry Creek Valley that'll be appreciated by your friends, family, and clients for years to come.



CABERNET VERTICAL GIFT BOX

A rare opportunity to taste our limited-production wines, the Cabernet Vertical contains one bottle each of 2003, 2004 and 2005 Dry Creek Valley T.R. Passalacqua Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon in a Passalacqua wooden gift box. (**\$200**)

[Purchase Cabernet Vertical Gift Box](#)

ZINFANDEL FLIGHT GIFT BOX

The Zinfandel Flight contains three outstanding Zinfandels from Dry Creek Valley: the 2006 Old Vine, 2006 Maple and 2006 Estate Zinfandel in a Passalacqua wooden gift box. (**\$150**)

[Purchase Zinfandel Flight Gift Box](#)

Also keep in mind that Wine Club memberships make great holiday gifts, bringing toast-worthy vintages to the recipients' tables throughout the coming year. With [three great clubs](#) to choose from, we have wine selections to suit all tastes and budgets...Call us at (877) 825-5547 or email us at info@passalacquawinery.com to arrange your gift of Passalacqua wine.

Farmer's Corner: Harvest 2008 at T.R. Passalacqua Ranch

Tom & Sandi Passalacqua

Mother Nature's whims made the 2008 growing season challenging here in Dry Creek Valley and in Sonoma County at large, with the impacts of weather patterns causing diligent vineyard managers to deviate from standard farming practices. We were fortunate to be among those who harvested a quality crop, while others were disappointed by the harsh effects of spring frosts and unusual farming conditions and had little or no fruit to deliver to the wineries.



Anticipating dry weather conditions in late spring, we commenced with irrigation four months early in March and April. As a result, there was sufficient groundwater at the time of bud break as well as during the heat spike and dry winds accompanying bloom prior to berry set. The watering helped the new Cabernet berries survive, so fruit set was normal. However, there was a major surprise at harvest time: crossing the scales at the winery, we found that the bunches of perfectly developed fruit were significantly lighter than they had appeared to be, by about 35 percent (can you imagine the anxiety at the moment of truth, when the scale weight tags state you've harvested 65 tons instead of the usual 100?). Our ranch was one of many to experience this phenomenon, and local experts are still trying to determine the causes. In any event, the volume delivered has the quality and character that will make for a memorable vintage, especially prized in this unpredictable year.

While many of the other varietals were delivered very early to the winery, we were able to delay the Dry Creek Valley Cabernet harvest to the usual time frame of mid- to late October by thinning, watering, and pulling leaves for a fourth time. The prolonged hang time allowed the brix, pH and acids to reach optimum levels, and subsequent to the crush and initial fermentation, the wine is yielding beautiful colors and a tremendously rich berry taste. The fruit from Blocks 18 and 19 is outstanding, and we're very pleased with the results in every other block harvested for the winery, including Block 20 with its classic notes and echoes of the fruit in the 2004 and 2005 Passalacqua Dry Creek Valley Cabernets.

Postcard from France: A Visit to Taransaud, Passalacqua's Cabernet Cooperage

During a mid-October journey through Southern France, our writer and event coordinator Aimée Oscamou had the great pleasure of visiting Taransaud Tonnellerie, home of the beautifully crafted barrels that lend the perfect toast to Passalacqua's Dry Creek Valley Cabernets. It's a rare treat to get a behind-the-scenes look at Taransaud's operation near Cognac in Merpins, and our representatives Jean-Pierre Giraud and Véronique Gomboso kindly hosted a tour from seasoning yard to shipping dock.

Taransaud brings generations of experience and a combination of modern technology and traditional tools to the art of barrel making, culminating in what they call the "perfect exchange" between wood and wine. Each made-to-order barrel begins with Bureau Veritas-certified French oak, selected by specialists and cut at the age of about 150 years. This wood is particularly hard and watertight, and provides rich and delicate flavors to wine.

After laser-guided splitting at one of Taransaud's mills, the resulting rough staves are tagged with tracking numbers and sent to the Merpins aging yard. This is where Aimée's tour began, as she and Véronique strolled past a fraction of the ten million staves drying in the 11-hectare lot behind the cooperage. On that particular day, they were getting a dose of rain instead of sunshine, but all of the elements contribute to the seasoning process that removes bitter tannins, reduces moisture and develops the most desirable aromatic aspects of the oak. Depending on the thickness and the grain of the wood, staves will spend 24, 30 or 36 months outdoors.

Once staves are seasoned, they're brought into the cooperage and the transformation begins. A skilled team inspects, planes and re-inspects the staves, and then either sends them into the barrel-head construction line or groups them by the barrel's worth for body assembly by the coopers. Every step is amazing to watch, particularly a cooper's first free-standing arrangement of the staves using nothing but a metal hoop, perfect balance and an experienced eye. From there come several rounds of heating, bending and hammering, followed by the to-order toasting that gives a fresh-off-the-fire barrel the aroma of freshly baked bread (Aimée's favorite part of the tour).

After toasting, each barrel is fitted with its top and bottom headings, subjected to two leakage control tests, finished (sometimes with the addition of wooden hoops and decorative willow trim) and marked with the Taransaud seal before being carefully packaged for shipment. The worldwide wine industry keeps Taransaud busy year-round fulfilling custom orders for its carefully crafted barrels and tanks. During her visit, Aimée saw several orders about to be shipped to South America, part of the next wine wave now that all of us in the Northern Hemisphere have completed our harvests.

Before departing, Aimée got a glimpse of the future of Taransaud during a stop in the on-site Cooperage School. Under the guidance of Master Cooper Martial Coulaud, several young apprentices were hard at work building barrels the old-fashioned way with traditional hand tools. Each studies the art of coopering for two years, and the best apprentices become part of the Taransaud team and a tradition of craftsmanship that yields that "perfect exchange" in Passalacqua's Dry Creek Valley cellar and others around the world.

Many thanks to our friends at Taransaud, who invite you to take your own peek behind the scenes at www.Taransaud.com



New in the Tasting Room: Cabernet and Zinfandel Flights

We will soon be offering flights of our Cabernets and Zinfandels in our Dry Creek Valley tasting room. Give us a call for more information.

Cabernet Sauvignon Flight: T.R. Passalacqua Vineyard

2004 Dry Creek Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
2005 Dry Creek Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
2004 Dry Creek Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, Blocks 18 & 19
2005 Dry Creek Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, Blocks 18 & 19

Zinfandel Flight

2006 Russian River Valley Zinfandel
2006 Dry Creek Valley Estate Zinfandel
2006 Dry Creek Valley Maple Zinfandel
2006 Dry Creek Valley Old Vine Zinfandel

