



VINEYARDS

The current trend for all things Rhône-like was not what started Fred Cline down the Rhone varietal path more than twenty years ago. His leap of faith from the traditional, well-trodden Cabernet route stemmed from his belief in the 'magnificent old vines that were in my own backyard.' While it has not been without struggle, Cline's vision has certainly paid off, and as a result Cline Cellars now bears the reputation for producing some of the finest Rhone-style wines and Zinfandels in the state of California.

Oakley

The Oakley ranch, situated 40 miles east of San Francisco, is home to Cline's Ancient Vines -some of California's oldest and most rare grapevines that range in age from 80 to 120 years old. One hundred and forty acres of varietals such as Mourvèdre, Carignane and Zinfandel are harvested. While Contra Costa is typically hot, the vines around the town of Oakley are in a viticulturally blessed sector of this region, one that experiences daytime heat and the moderating effect of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers, which significantly reduces the temperature at night. Cline's Mourvèdre and Carignane are planted in small blocks of gnarly, head-pruned vines in sandy soil. Because the vines are head-trained (without trellis), the vines often touch the ground when laden with fruit. This combination of growing conditions heightens the intensity of the fruit and forces the old vines to struggle to produce one to two tons of fruit per acre. The sandy soil also successfully inhibits the dreaded louse, phylloxera.

Carneros

Sonoma Valley, separated from Napa Valley by the Mayacamas Mountains to the east, has a cooler, more pronounced maritime climate that allows fruit to mature slowly and gracefully. Our southern Sonoma County location, home of Cline Cellars since 1991, is in the Carneros district, one of California's most coveted tracts of vineyard real estate. Carneros, which extends across the cool southern extremes of both Sonoma and Napa counties, abuts the flatlands north of San Pablo Bay (the northernmost section of the San Francisco Bay region), sleeping nightly under a blanket of chilly fog. In the afternoons, bay winds roar into Carneros' gentle hills, moderating the blistering summer heat. With vines planted in shallow clay and loam soils, the climatic conditions force the vines to struggle for survival, reducing their yield. Sounds bad, but here's the good news: yield reduction means flavor concentration. Carneros vines of all varieties produce small, tight clusters of luscious fruit with an elegant balance of piquant acidity and mineral nuances.

Petaluma

In the mid 1990's after fully developing the Carneros property where Cline Cellars is located, Fred Cline was presented an opportunity to purchase some property in Petaluma, a short distance as the crow flies from the winery. Fred quickly grasped that, just as years before Carneros had been, southern Petaluma was an area of unleashed potential. The climate is cooler, similar to the Alsace region of France. These vineyards are typically enshrouded in early morning coastal fog, bathed in intense midday heat and cooled by late afternoon Pacific breezes. With more than twice the annual rainfall of inland appellations, the grapes demand longer hang time to ripen. And although the yields are smaller, like Alsatian wine, the quality is better.