

Dry Creek Valley wines offer abundance of flavor

Separated by a range of hills, the American Viticultural Area known as Dry Creek Valley runs parallel to Alexander Valley in northern Sonoma County. The northern end is warm, and lacking a river influence, it is an ideal region for growing zinfandel and cabernet sauvignon with ripe berry flavors and melony sauvignon blanc.

The fertile, well-drained, valley-floor soils, influenced by morning fog in the south, are also well known for quality sauvignon blanc with a heightened grassy character. The Dry Creek Valley benchlands, have red soils and less fog influence. This is an area that boasts 100-year-old zinfandel vines and distinguished cabernet sauvignon exhibiting attractive herbal, dill and olive components.

Doug Nalle, co-owner and winemaker at Nalle Winery who has experience working with Dry Creek fruit, believes that the region should be divided into north and south.

"It is impossible to say that Dry Creek is best for one varietal over another because the boundaries are too general," he said. "When identifying best locations, north versus south must be considered, based on temperature differences as well as soil and site."

John Pedroncelli owns the oldest producing winery (since 1927) in Dry Creek Valley. "Even in Bordeaux, there are good sites and poor ones," he explains. "They're not all first growths."

In the warmer, upper end of Dry Creek Valley, Preston Vineyards is demonstrating that southern Rhone varietals, such as syrah and mourvèdre, are successful.

"When planted on gravelly soil, syrah achieves good flavor development and smoky, earthy, ripe plum characters akin to the northern Rhone," said Lou Preston, owner of Preston Vineyards.

"Typical Dry Creek zinfandel develops ripe fruit, jammy, raspberry and blackberry flavors and spiciness (cinnamon, clove, allspice). It's not heavy and tannic, but medium bodied with a claret-like quality."

"When grown on well-drained benchland, Dry Creek cabernet sau-

Smoking adds flavor to fish, meat

See Larry Jones' column, Taste Buds on Taste front.

GARLIC SMOKED SWORDFISH

2 swordfish steaks
1/2 cup butter or margarine
2 large cloves garlic, finely minced
1 tablespoon chopped parsley or chives
1 pound soaked hardwood chunks

Prepare a covered grill as desired for cooking. Make sure coals are white hot and covered with just a little grey ash. Add about 2 cups of the drained hardwood to the hot coals, cover the grill and allow the wood to begin to burn and create a good smoke. Meanwhile, combine butter or margarine with finely minced garlic and parsley. Mix well. When grill is smoking, place fish on the rack about 4-6 inches from heat source. Brush lightly with garlic butter creation and cook, as desired. A basic 1/2-inch swordfish steak will cook in about 10-15 minutes in a covered smoker.

HICKORY SMOKED BURGERS
2 pounds hamburger, made into burgers
1 pound hickory chunks, soaked in water, drained

Prepare the grill with coals and allow the coals to become white hot and covered with just a little grey ash. Drain the hickory and add to coals to begin smoking. Place burgers on the grill about 4-6 inches from heat source. Cook as desired.

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focus on wine

Eleanor and Ray Heald

vignon exhibits soft tannins with a rancid fruit accompanied by a delicate herbal, cedar-sage quality. The wines are typically round and soft with medium body. They are accessible when young and do not require lengthy bottle age to be attractive. In 1971, David Star founded Dry Creek Vineyards in the Dry Creek Valley. "The Dry Creek sauvignon blanc is a very flavorful grape and produces a grassy, herbaceous style," said Star. "The heavy, rich bottomland soil of the valley floor encourages vine vigor and a characteristic herbaceousness."

"When I started making sauvignon blanc from 100 percent Dry Creek fruit, it had a strong varietal character that I like in the wine. But this business is market driven, and the consumer doesn't appreciate that style as much as I do. Currently, I blend Dry Creek and Alexander Valley sauvignon blanc to produce a wine with highlighted melony fruit and just the right touch of varietal herbaceousness."

Successful Dry Creek chardonnay is site dependent. When grown on gravelly, well-drained benchland soils, chardonnay develops a distinct, sage, earthy-dusty character.

According to George Bursick,

WINE SELECTIONS OF THE WEEK

1990 Preston Vineyards Cuvee de Fume (\$11) is 81 percent sauvignon blanc and 19 percent semillon. The aroma is alive with pear, apple, mineral and barrel fermentation elements. Fresh fig and pear flavors enhance a wine with a citrusy finish that's a perfect accompaniment for grilled fish. It's consistently one of the best sauvignon blancs from Dry Creek Valley.

1988 Dry Creek Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (\$17) is a classic representation of a cabernet from a Dry Creek Valley winery. Blended with 10 percent merlot, it showcases blackberry fruit with gentle spiciness and well-married oak. This big, bold, rich, ripe rendition finishes streamlined and elegant.

winemaker at Ferrari-Carano. "When grown on the deep, fertile, valley floor, Dry Creek chardonnay can develop the same varietal characteristics as sauvignon blanc."

Jewish sweet treats

See related story on Taste front.

A busy mother of three, who operates a business out of her home, Leslie Miller's cooking philosophy is to pour everything into a pot and let it cook.

She likes foods that are easy to make, but taste like you've been fussing over them for hours. Following are fruit compote and noodle kugel, two of her family's favorite Rosh Hashana recipes. The honey cake recipe is from the Quaker Oats Kitchen, the carrot tzimmes is from the Culinary Institute of America.

FRUIT COMPOTE
1 16 oz. can pitted Bing cherries
1 16 oz. can pineapple chunks
1 16 oz. can fruit cocktail
1 16 oz. can apricots
1 cup white raisins, cooked in water to plump them up
1/2 cup sweet red wine
Combine fruit, including juice in a baking pan. Bake at 350 F. for 35 to 45 minutes. Chill. Serve cold.

NOODLE KUGEL
1 bag of flat egg noodles
1 can crushed pineapple, drained well
1 cup white or brown raisins
1/2 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cinnamon
3 eggs
Cook and drain noodles. In a bowl, mix egg, cinnamon, sugar, add pineapple, raisins, and noodles. Mix well. Put in a greased 9 x 12



Honey Cake is a traditional dessert during Rosh Hashana.

baking dish, sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake 350 F. for 35 to 45 minutes.

HONEY CAKE

1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1/2 cup wheat germ
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 cup honey
1/2 cup coffee, cooled
1/2 cup vegetable oil
5 egg whites, slightly beaten
2 teaspoons grated orange peel
1 cup peeled, chopped apple
powdered sugar

Heat oven to 350 F. Grease bottom of an 8 or 9-inch square baking pan; set aside. Combine first 7 ingredients. In separate bowl, combine honey, coffee, oil, egg whites and orange peel; add to dry ingredi-

ents, mixing well. Stir in apple. Pour into prepared pan. Bake about 50 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean and top is dark brown.

CARROT TZIMMES

2 pounds carrots, peeled and sliced
Pinch salt
1/2 cup honey
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup flour

Place carrots in a heavy saucepan and add cold water to cover. Bring to a simmer and cook until carrots are almost tender. Add salt, honey and lemon juice; simmer for 20 minutes.

In another saucepan, heat oil. Add flour and blend. Add carrots and cooking liquid; simmer, stirring constantly, until thickened. Brown lightly under the broiler before serving. Makes 6 servings.

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