

There's Old Vine Gold in Them Hills!

It's hard to keep anything a secret in this town. That was the thought running through our heads while taking part in a special lunch at La Calenda, Thomas Keller's new Mexican restaurant in Yountville.

Legendary 100-point consultant Philippe Melka, and his Director of Winemaking Maayan Koschitzky, a veteran of Screaming Eagle and Dalle Valle, were giving us and few other industry insiders a sneak peek at their latest releases with Andis Wines, a rising star in the Sierra Foothills

Their 2017 Painted Fields Old Vine Zinfandel, a gorgeously fresh, pure amalgam of black plum and winter spice, was an absolute knockout. **Considering the star power behind it, everyone was going to want a piece once word got out especially at a come-and-get-it list price of \$25.** With inventory limited by its heritage vineyard sources, a patchwork of sites evoking the Gold Rush era, there would be a lot of empty hands.

But not ours. Before lunch had ended, we were lobbying hard to secure our allocation of this bold new California classic before supply ran out. Almost Cabernet-like in its complexity but with the freshness we normally associate with Pinot Noir, **we believe this old-vine Zin will be remembered as one of the bottles that put Amador County on the map.**

Melka and Koschitzky are household names in the Napa wine business; there isn't much they haven't accomplished here. Melka's list of heavyweight clients includes Quintessa, Vineyard 29, Dana Estates, and Seavy. So when a new opportunity arose for them to make their mark in the fast-rising Amador County, tucked away in the Sierra Foothills, working with some of the oldest vines in California, it was the opportunity they had been waiting for.

Amador County is becoming a hotspot for winemakers in search of magic fruit at superb values. Estates like Favia (run by superstars Andy Erickson and Annie Favia) and Keplinger source some of their favorite Rhône grapes here. In Wine Spectator's "Editor's Pick" issue, editor Tim Fish declared that an Amador County Zin had spurred his "aha" wine moment of the year—the revelation that old-school California Zin like this one represents the peak of authenticity and regionality.

Working with Andis owner Andrew Friedlander, Melka and Koschitzky increased freshness, complexity, and precision through new equipment, improved protocols, and made farming adjustments that drove up acidity and pushed back on sugars and ripeness. They let the ancient vines do the heavy lifting, and kept the juice pure and clean through to the end. Don't bother trying to sip; drink this under-\$25 benchmark with unabashed pleasure.

Wine Access Tasting Notes

"Bright purple on the rim with rich and dense core concentration. A festival of bramble and lilacs lead the parade with layers of fresh plum and winter spice. Juicy and generous from the get-go with notes of peach yogurt, star anise, and a hint of cinnamon. Lively until the last drop with a long finish"

