

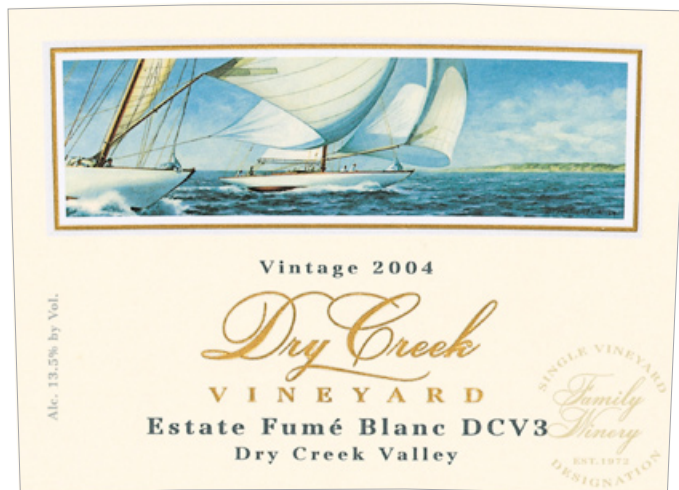
grape & grain

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BY BOB HOSMON

Love Affair With Wine

David Stare achieved series of firsts



■ Add the name of David S. Stare to the list of pioneers in California wine making. While not a household name like Robert Mondavi, Stare deserves to be.

Educated at MIT, he worked for the B&O Railroad for several years before migrating to California in the early 1960s and beginning his love affair with wine.

Originally, he intended to start a winery in France, “but after reading a Wall Street Journal article about the burgeoning wine industry in California, ” Stare recalls, “I decided to head west.”

He enrolled as a graduate student in the world-renowned wine program at the

University of California-Davis, and on weekends looked for potential vineyard sites from Monterey to Mendocino. But it was Sonoma County’s Dry Creek Valley that Stare fixed on, so he bought an old prune orchard and began planting vines. The result: the establishment of Dry Creek Vineyard in 1972.

In the process, Stare unwittingly achieved status as a California wine pioneer. His was the first new winery in Dry Creek Valley since Prohibition; he was the first to plant Sauvignon Blanc grapes in the Dry Creek Valley, was the first to produce a Fumé Blanc in Sonoma County, and was the first to label a wine as “Old Vines” Zinfandel.

For decades his Sauvignon Blancs have won accolades. Perfect examples of that superior white are the Dry Creek Estate Fumé Blanc DCV3 and the Dry Creek Taylor’s Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc Musqué. On the palate, the Estate Fumé shows bright spicy character with flavors of citrus in every sip and an underlying herbaceous quality. The Taylor’s Vineyard is made from a unique clone of Sauvignon Blanc grape and delivers a food-friendly wine that shows up smooth on the palate and ends in a lingering finish.

Among Stare’s red wine, it’s the zinfandels that reign supreme. Particular favorites include the Dry Creek Valley Heritage and the Dry Creek Valley Old Vines zins. If you thought that “zinfandel” was a pink or salmon-colored wine, you’re for a big treat once you sip any of the Dry Creek Valley red zins. They’re perfect complements to grilled meats, barbecued ribs, pizza, and any pasta made with meat and cheese or tomato sauce.

To say that Dry Creek Vineyard is a star in the California pantheon of wine is no overstatement. Nor is it questionable that David Stare made it all happen. This year he retired from day-to-day work at the winery, but his family will carry on the tradition he began more than 40 years ago. On behalf of wine lovers everywhere, “here’s to you, David Stare.” Job well done.