



## Mike Dunne's Wine of the Week Pick

May 5, 2010

### Z52 Winery 2006 Lodi Zinfandel

OK, it's [Cinco de Mayo](#), which in culinary circles means it's time to resume the search for a wine to accompany tostadas, tamales and tacos.

For the sake of brevity, let's suspend any discussion about the composition of those tostadas, tamales and tacos and assume that they are relatively light, not too heavy on the beans and beef or the spicier seasonings.

In that case, look no farther than zinfandel, which when made without too much extraction, alcohol and oak should pack enough fresh and forward berry fruit flavor, flexible tannins and notes of peppery spice to hold its own in head-to-head matchups with moderately built tostadas, tamales and tacos.

Z52 Winery in [Napa Valley](#) makes just that kind of zinfandel, but it ventures far afield to get the fruit it wants, namely to Lodi. While the Z52 Winery 2006 Lodi Zinfandel has the sort of ripe and earthy flavors for which the appellation is recognized, they don't overshadow the wine's sunshine, which runs mostly to raspberries picked at prime maturity and given just a quick spray of water to rinse off the dust.

*Despite its modest price, however, this is no simple zinfandel. While dry, it does carry the lilting sweetness of oak, as well as a fleeting dash of black pepper. It's also deceptively complex, with facets that shift from berries and stems to walnuts and tar during a meal.*

Z52 is a brand devoted largely to vineyard-designated zinfandels, including takes from Clockspring Vineyard in [Amador County](#) and Agnes' Vineyard in Lodi. The 2006 Lodi Zinfandel, however, is a departure. While 85 percent of the blend is from a 47-year-old, dry-farmed, head-pruned vineyard along Highway 12 east of [Highway 99](#) in Lodi, the rest is from a hillside vineyard in Sonoma Valley.

The Sonoma vines are younger than the Lodi vineyard, and sustain more stress, largely because of the fractured basalt on which they stand. Thus, the juice their grapes yield is more tannic. "We use this (Sonoma) fruit to provide the blend with additional structure, without taking away the lush fruit character that the Lodi fruit offers," says Brent Shortridge, managing partner of Z52 Winery.

The other principal partner in Z52 is veteran California winemaker Philip Zorn. The "Z" of the brand represents both Zorn and zinfandel, while the "52" stands for "the 52 weeks in a vintage year, 52 rows in Agnes' Vineyard, and 52 cards in a full deck," the latter a reference to their realization that their exclusive focus on small-lot single-vineyard zinfandels, however noble, is "rarely played with a full deck of cards."

**Context:** Shortridge and Zorn recommend that their 2006 Lodi Zinfandel be paired with grilled meats and pastas with tomato-based sauces, though they aren't likely to argue with the consumer who likes it with Mexican food, regardless of the date.