

Carol's Bunch

SPRING HAS SPRUNG IN THIS LEAP YEAR!

Yay – it's SPRING!... Actually it's almost summer here, with our allergies blooming along with the flowers and grape vines. Yes, that's right, we are in full-on bloom now, about 2-3 weeks earlier than usual. We did have early budbreak, thanks to an exceptionally warm February, and since then the temps have been much cooler... and much WETTER! Northern CA has had some relief from the drought; reservoirs are full and snow pack is sooo much better than previous years! In fact, we are so thrilled with Mother Nature's gift of relief that we are celebrating by giving YOU a gift... an extra **\$10 off** this shipment! When it rains goodness we like to share the karma!

Even Southern California has seen a wee bit of precipitation... we are keeping our fingers and toes crossed that it is enough to get a nice crop off of our beloved Monga Zin grapes from Cucamonga. We have been out of this historic gem for 10 months now, since the 2013 ran out, so I am happy to say that we will finally be bottling the 2014 Monga next month. It will be available once again by midsummer, but with NO crop of Monga in 2015, it may go super-fast. Rest assured that we will hold back enough to get you each a bottle in the November shipment!



Pre-bloom grape clusters from our Chardonnay vineyard in Dry Creek Valley.
Photo by Carol Shelton.

While writing this, we are at 32,000 feet, jetting home from a sales trip in NY/ NJ/CT. We had a great time there, visiting stores and doing five wine dinners...

now we need to go home to "real" work, and workouts to make up for all the delicious but rich food! We connected with so many of you Back East – it was really gratifying to have so many friendly faces sharing our events. We even managed to squeeze in a super tour of the Martin Guitar Factory (for Mitch!) in Nazareth, PA, as well as a Broadway musical about Carole King called Beautiful! Nice to get a bit of downtime... we "felt the earth move" "up on the roof"... it was a real "Tapestry" of nostalgia for this "Natural Woman"!

More exciting news – the NEW website is LIVE! Go check it out... we are still tweaking out bugs of all sorts but decided to launch it anyway, including our fabulous new LIVE "Shopping Cart." It took longer than previously thought, thanks to

complications from our lovely interstate shipping legal chaos, but we now have it up and running—you should have received an email by now, describing how to create a login for yourself. Without this login, the system will not recognize you as a club member and you will not get your discounts, and might not even be able to buy some of our more special "Club only" wines, so make sure you take the wee bit of time to set yourself up, OK?

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This April shipment has a BUNCH of tasty new releases (4!) and a last fond look at two retiring beauties. The 2014 Coquille Blanc is the BEST vintage yet, IMHO, so be sure to try this "white wine for red wine drinkers!" Since there is a trio of Rockpile wines in here, we have a great article on this AVA, as well as one on our grower Jack Florence, Sr., who did the real work getting the TTB to create our special appellation.

Come on and get your sunscreen on, warm up the grill and dust off those patio chairs. It's time to crawl out of your hibernation and open up some sunny new wines--enjoy!

Cheers!

Carol Shelton

Grower Feature:

FLORENCE VINEYARD, ROCKPILE



Carol has a standing "hot" date with Jack Florence, Sr., every year at sunrise on the day they harvest his vineyard in Rockpile. This "mad affair" started back in 2000, the year Carol started the winery and first purchased Zinfandel from Jack. They were connected by Kent Rosenblum, a mutual friend and a winemaker also purchasing Jack's Zin fruit. Jack and other growers in the as-yet-undefined Rockpile area were in the process of getting government approval of Rockpile as an American Viticultural Area (AVA), and they needed noteworthy winemakers to use their high elevation grapes for some stellar wines that would get a lot of publicity for the quality of the region. A part of the approval process is that wines made from the proposed AVA must be shown to have "distinctly different character" from the wines of nearby appellations, like Dry Creek Valley, which Rockpile overlaps. Carol's 2000 Rocky Reserve Zin won a unanimous 5-Star Gold medal from the prestigious Orange County Fair judging, which all but guaranteed Rockpile a spot on the appellation map!

Certainly the wine is outstanding, but who is Jack Florence, Sr., and why is his vineyard in Rockpile so special? Before he started growing grapes in Sonoma County, Jack Florence, Sr. was a born and raised New Yorker, with a degree in Nuclear Engineering from Brooklyn Polytechnic University. He spent over 20 years in that industry, developing nuclear energy as a resource, with most of his time spent traveling to and from Asia. Over the years, it was increasingly difficult to spend so much time away from his wife Fran and their three kids. "It was in the early 1970's when a very important client in South Korea insisted on a face-to-face meeting on Easter Sunday. I attended the meeting that morning and left quickly to board a plane back to California so I could celebrate Easter Sunday dinner with my family." He made it just in time, thanks to the International Dateline, but he arrived home exhausted. "That was the day Fran and I decided it was time to make some changes."

We Want to Buy a Vineyard...

After their enlightening Easter Sunday, they shifted priorities from career and money to finding a home where their family could feel more connected to the land, but still make a living. They researched citrus and other farming options, until Jack came across an article in the LA Times about growing grapes in Napa Valley. The article was written by Andy Beckstoffer, founder of the legendary Beckstoffer Vineyards. Jack and Fran knew nothing about wine, but they were sure that growing grapes was the change they sought for their family. Never impulsive, Jack started researching grape-growing and the wine industry. He and Fran started visiting wineries and tasting rooms, asking lots of questions that he is now (forty years later) embarrassed to have asked, like "how do you pronounce this?" ...but he had to start somewhere. While they were researching their new direction, Jack was offered a big promotion, but it was a job that would

take them away from California to the corporate office in Cleveland. He turned it down, and immediately set his course for Sonoma County wine country.

After struggling to find their dream property in Sonoma County, they decided to take an ad out in the paper. It was titled, "WE WANT TO BUY A VINEYARD," and it worked! A broker contacted them and showed them a vineyard in Dry Creek Valley. They took one look and decided to buy what is now Florence Vineyard in Dry Creek Valley, currently the source of Carol's Dry Creek Petite Sirah. Their second vineyard located in Rockpile was to follow over two decades later.

The adVINETure begins...

At the beginning in Dry Creek they hired a vineyard manager, and according to Jack it was "not a happy marriage". In what has become quite a stereotypical relationship, the absentee owner versus vineyard manager, the owner doesn't know what's going on but he keeps getting big bills, and the manager is doing work the owner thinks is easy but is definitely not.

When their first vintage came around, Jack was extremely excited, and he even invited Fran's dad to come work the harvest with him and his sons. The four of them rode up to the vineyard in Jack's sporty blue Mazda and planned to pick grapes alongside the vineyard crew. He drove his car into the vineyard and opened the trunk to load bins as the boys and his father-in-law filled them with grapes. At the end of the first row, exhausted and ready to quit, they looked up and the vineyard crew was rows ahead of them, almost finished picking the entire vineyard...and his vineyard manager was laughing at him.

The vineyard manager didn't last much longer after that, because Jack and Fran moved their family up to Dry Creek Valley, and Jack left his career to work the vineyard himself full-time. It was quite a leap to go from nuclear engineer to grape farmer, but Jack made the transition at the age of 49. He started pulling

weeds...tons of weeds on cold, foggy mornings, and then he moved on to pruning and tying the canes onto trellises, and stripping suckers off of the trunks while he was on his hands and knees. He would rope his sons into helping as much as they could, ultimately sparking a passion for the vineyard in Jack, Jr. that eventually would take them all up to Rockpile.

Rockpile officially became an AVA in 2002, thanks to the collaboration of the Florence and Park families who spent 2 years putting together a proposal for the government to recognize Rockpile as a very unique and special place.

Carol and Jack continue to meet for their harvest rendezvous up at Jack's vineyard every year, both doing their part to spread a passion for the AVA. Carol's Rocky Reserve Zin, Rockpile Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, and Rockpile Reserve Petite Sirah are great examples of the elegant style that Rockpile fruit can produce.



Carol & Jack Florence, Sr. during Harvest 2013.



Rockpile Welcome. Photo by Carol Shelton.

Here are the details on this box of deliciousness, listed in suggested tasting order! The total tab for this shipment is **\$141.60**, before any applicable tax & shipping.

2014 COQUILLE BLANC

Nevarez Vineyard, Paso Robles

*Coquille is pronounced "ko-keel" and it is French for shellfish or scallop, like the scallop shells on the Shelton family coat of arms.

We originally created the 2008 version of this wine to celebrate our 10th anniversary as a winery in 2010. With the exotic complexity and food friendliness of a white Rhone-style blend, it is a "red-drinker's white," a complex alternative to the more one-dimensional white varietal wines like Chardonnay and Sauvignon blanc. It is the perfect complement to its namesake shellfish, as well as chicken or pork dishes with buttery-creamy sauces. **Case Production:** 670 cases

New Release & 90 Points from Connoisseurs' Guide!

Aging Potential: 5-10 years

Composition: 38% Grenache blanc, 32% Roussanne, 20% Viognier, 10% Marsanne

Price: \$24/\$19.20 Club



Carol's Tasting Notes

Exotic nose of spicy pears and white peaches, almond paste/marzipan, a touch of honeysuckle perfume. Multi-dimensional (many layers), a hard-to-describe range of aromatics, intriguing, almost mysterious!

In the mouth it is crisply dry yet creamy and round and full-bodied, with nice almond paste on crisp-yet-juicy pear fruit. Carol thinks this is her best vintage of Coquille yet!

2013 *Wild Thing*[®] Old Vine Zinfandel

A lastlook at our 2013 Wild Thing Zin! This is consistently our best-selling favorite in the tasting room and at events, and in retail and restaurants. The wild yeast ferment makes it super creamy and boosts the wonderful berry fruit from our Mendocino grower, and the blend with Carignane and Petite Sirah fills in any "holes" in the flavor profile.

6 Gold Medals, 90 Points & Best Buy from Wine Enthusiast Magazine!

Organically Grown & Wild Yeast Fermented

Case Production: 11,475 cases

Aging Potential: 5-7 years

Composition: 80% old vine Zinfandel, 14% old vine Carignane, 5% Petite Sirah, 1% Alicante Bouschet—75% Mendocino County

Price: \$19/\$15.20 Club



Carol's Tasting Notes

Aromas of black cherry, plum and raspberry fruit combine with a beautiful hint of vanilla-oak, smoothly textured in mouth, very creamy and round, the finish is long and has lush jammy fruit — this wine is dangerously good! Remember — you are what you drink

2013 *Pizzazz Zin*, Old Vine Zinfandel

Piazza Vineyard, Lodi

We chose to honor Charlie Piazza's half century of growing in Lodi by making an anagram of his name to christen this classic old-style Zin. These gnarly head-trained vines deliver brilliant wild cherry jam on a milk chocolate-marshmallow background. S'more, please!

89 Points from Connoisseurs' Guide

Case Production: 1134 cases

Composition: 96% Zinfandel, 4% Petite Sirah

Price: \$19/\$15.20 Club



Carol's Tasting Notes

Zippy Bing cherry pie in a graham cracker crust, creamy Hershey's milk chocolate and a bit of toasted marshmallow—not sweet but soft and round - balanced by juicy acidity, with a creamy caramello oak and a long cherry finish. S'mores with cherry jam!

2013 Rocky Reserve Zin

Florence Vineyard, Rockpile

The name for our reserve wine, Rocky Reserve®, comes from the deep red, rocky soils of the Florence Vineyard, 1400 feet above Lake Sonoma and Dry Creek Valley. Full morning sun and gentle afternoon breezes allow 3 weeks' longer hangtime than Zins along Dry Creek, affording very soft, ripe tannins. This is a more elegant and restrained Zin, worthy of five or more years of cellaring, though it is packed with fragrant blackberry fruit.

Double Gold Medal & 89 Points!

Case Production: 505 cases

Aging Potential: 15+ years

Composition: 86% Zinfandel, 14% Petite Sirah

Price: \$35/\$28 Club



Carol's Tasting Notes

Nice dark-red in color, big blueberry-blackberry fruit, spicy-chocolatey oak, nicely focused acidity enhances mineral flavors, elegantly structured tannins for aging, super plush long finish! Carol blended Petite Sirah in here to give more structure and just a bit of "friction" as well as gorgeous peppery spice.

2013 ROCKPILE RESERVE PETITE SIRAH

Rockpile Vineyard, Rockpile

The Petite Sirah is the from the Parks' Rockpile Vineyard, one of the first vineyards to be planted in the AVA, back in 1992. It is not a "rip your face off" Petite, but elegant while still full bodied, and packed with blueberries, black pepper and sweet oak.

New Release!

Case Production: 253 cases

Aging Potential: 15+ years

Composition: 100% Petite Sirah from Rockpile

Price: \$40/\$32 Club



Carol's Tasting Notes

Passionate purple in color, lively black peppery spice on perfumey blue-blackberry fruit along with cedary oak spice, dusty cocoa, warm vanilla creme at finish, structured tannins for aging.

2013 ROCKPILE RESERVE CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Rockpile Vineyard, Rockpile

This Cabernet Sauvignon is the second varietal of the series to be released, and it comes from the Rockpile Vineyard of Rod and Cathy Park, at 2000 foot elevation. It is graciously styled with black cherry-cassis fruit and a nice hint of tobacco and cedar-spice, with the long smooth creamy finish that is so characteristic of Rockpile reds.

New Release!

Sustainably Grown—

Case Production: 133 cases

Aging Potential: 15+ years

Composition: 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petite Sirah all from Rockpile

Price: \$50/\$40 Club



Carol's Tasting Notes

Dark red in color. Black cherry-cola and cassis fruit, long and deep on nose and palate. Cedary oak spice and warm pipe tobacco aromas, dark chocolate, vanilla at finish, smoothly structured tannins.

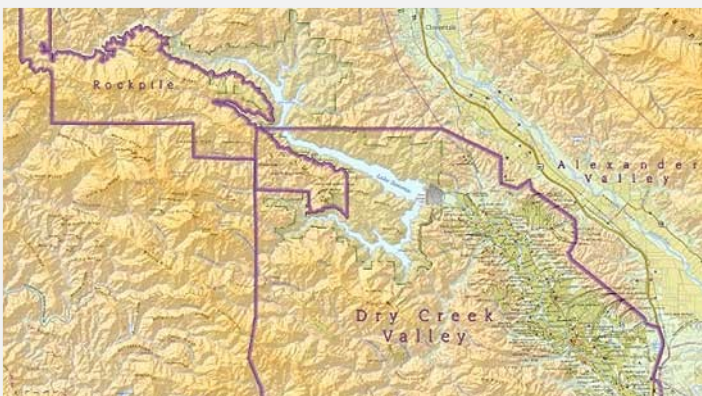
ROCKPILE AVA

There is one road to Rockpile, and if you ever get the chance you should take it. There are no wineries or tasting rooms, so if you want to taste wine you will have to stop in Dry Creek Valley on your way up or down (yes, it's tough work!). The terrain is just as the name says – steep, rocky slopes that are literally a rock-pile, albeit a pile that is mountain-sized. The southern end, which overlaps the Dry Creek Valley AVA, is wrapped by Lake Sonoma (see map), which brings cooling breezes to the higher elevations during the hot afternoons that can roast the vineyards in Dry Creek Valley below. Rockpile Road crosses a bridge over the lake, then as you drive up and up, and around and up some more, it becomes clear that you are headed to a very special grape-growing region, whose vineyards must be planted at elevations no lower than 800 feet.

Rockpile sounds like an unromantic name for this prestigious grape growing region, but the rugged name can be traced to that of a Pomo Indian village which thrived over 200 years ago at the base of Rockpile Peak. The colorful history of the region continues with controversial Sonoma County Sheriff, Tennessee Carter Bishop, who founded Rockpile Ranch in 1867, and is said to have used prisoners from the county jail to carve out a road along the mountain ridge above Dry Creek Valley for over 15 miles up to his front door, which they called "working on the Rockpile." Bishop actually planted some vineyards here in 1872, but they died off when he found out how much work viticulture is! Other denizens of Rockpile have included an infamous outlaw from the Jesse James gang, and actors from the Bonanza television series, who briefly invested in a sheep and cattle ranch on the site of the Sheriff's Ranch.

For decades, Rockpile was a popular hunting spot, but vineyards made a big return to Rockpile in 1992, when Rod and Cathy Park planted their Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard in the northwest end of the appellation, at 2000 foot elevation and far from the lake, but closer to the Pacific Ocean. Carol's first vintage from their Rockpile Vineyard was 2006, when she made Rockpile Reserve Petite Sirah, and a year later she added the 2007 Rockpile Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon to her lineup of outstanding Rockpile wines. These wines are true to the elegance and minerality that is a hallmark of all Rockpile wines.

Two years later in 1994, Jack Florence, Jr. planted his Zinfandel vineyards in the southeastern end of the appellation at 1400 feet. Ironically, the Zin used to bud Jack's vines came from a vineyard planted during the 1870's, making it a contemporary to the first planting by Sheriff Bishop up in Rockpile. That Cloverdale vineyard is called St. Peter's Church, and is one of the oldest surviving vineyards in California today, providing the scion wood for most of Rockpile's Zin vines. Jack's parents, Jack and Fran Florence, planted their vineyard with these same cuttings shortly after their son in 1997; their vineyard has been the source for Carol's Rocky Reserve Zin since the first crop of fruit off the vines in 2000.



the coordinator of all the growers in the area. Kent Rosenblum and Carol each made wines from the Florences' fruit that brought great attention in the press...and voilà!...the Rockpile AVA was approved! The region sprawls over 15,000 acres, but most of that is so steep and rocky that it is not farmable—currently only about 160 acres are planted with vines.

It is an AVA defined by shallow, rocky soils, and high elevation that places it above the fog line and affords full exposure to the more gentle morning sun. Its proximity to both Lake Sonoma and the Pacific Ocean gives it a cooler, more temperate climate, making grape hang-time average a couple of weeks longer than the nearby Dry Creek Valley. As a result, the grapes are more evenly ripe in both flavor and tannins. The red wines that come from Rockpile are complex, elegant and dense, with supple, cocoa powder-like tannins and a sense of minerality that is very typical of high elevation fruit on shallow soils. Carol's Zin, Petite & Cabernet from Rockpile have these qualities in abundance!

Rockpile AVA Quick Facts:

- ◇ Total Acreage: 15,000; 160 planted to vineyards
- ◇ Elevation: 800' minimum to nearly 2100'
- ◇ Average Temperature: 10-15° cooler than Dry Creek Valley
- ◇ Average rainfall: 50-73"
- ◇ Wind Influence: Constant breezes of 3-5 mph; more commonly, the onshore flow feeds the area with sustained gusts of 10-15 mph.
- ◇ Soil composition: Generally loam to clay loam with a red brown color due to the higher oxidation. It is only 12 to 24 inches deep in the best of viticultural locations.
- ◇ Varietals Grown: Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Petite Verdot, and several heritage Porto varieties.

Quick Facts are from
www.rockpileappellation.com

One day late in 1999, Jack Sr. and Jack, Jr. tasted their Zinfandel and knew they had something special. They decided that if ever a region deserved to have its own appellation, it was here. That day they made it their goal to get the Federal government to create a Rockpile AVA, a process that is time consuming and requires coordination and agreement among all the vineyard owners and growers in the region. They believed in the quality of their grapes and went to work with their neighbors.

It took exactly 24 months for Rockpile to become an official American Viticultural Area (AVA), starting in the spring of 2000 and becoming official on April 29, 2002. Jack, Jr gathered all the information and data on the soil, topography, climate and maps of the region. Cathy Park researched the history of Rockpile, and Jack Sr. was the liaison with the government and

Mark your calendar!

Saturday, June 25th

At Carol Shelton Wines

11am-4pm

Red, White & Rosé! BBQ

**This event will be replacing the July Luau this summer.



SUMMER SHIPMENT?!

Due to popular demand, we will be offering an optional, 4th summer shipment this year, to bridge that long thirsty gap between our regular shipments in late April and late October. Watch your e-mail for details soon!

Rocky's Favorite Steak Salad

Pairs perfectly with Rocky Reserve Zinfandel!

Our Rocky (the doxie) loved it when we made this salad—he was Mitch's BBQ assistant, and he eagerly licked the butcher-paper wrapper from the raw steak and caught any scraps that just “happened” to fall his way while cooking. Of course, his favorite part was licking the plates clean of lovely steak juices and dressing, after his humans were finished devouring the salad with their glasses of his namesake wine!

Use a nice lower-fat cut of Steak—we use NY strip, and we figure about ½ pound per person eating. Trim excess fat off of meat—S&P as desired, then marinate 1-24 hours before grilling to your desired degree of doneness.

Marinade:

2T Extra Virgin Olive Oil
2 T Rocky Reserve Zin (or another GOOD Zin if you want to drink all of the Rocky!)
1 T freshly chopped mint
1 T freshly chopped rosemary
1 T minced garlic

Salad Dressing:

2 T Extra Virgin Olive Oil (I use a roasted garlic one by Annie's, from Costco)

Toss with:

Mixed greens—the “herb salad” from Whole Foods is awesome if you can get it!
More mint leaves, basil and cilantro (as you please)—pluck the leaves only and tear into smaller pieces
1 cup thinly sliced celery (about 1-2 stalks)
½ cup RIPE Strawberries, sliced thinly, more if you really love them!
1 ripe Avocado, peeled, pitted and cut into chunks
1 small can of mandarin oranges, or seeded fresh tangerine segments work well too
1 small ripe pear, thinly sliced and core removed
A small handful of Cheese—blue crumbles or grated asiago
Crispy onion bits (fried ones like you use on green bean casserole!) and croutons

Toss salad ingredients with dressing. Slice grilled steak very thin into mouth-size bites, and place on top of each entrée-sized serving of salad.





Order Form

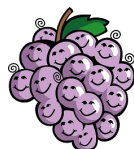
Wines	Retail Price	Wine Club	Quantity
Wild Thing Chardonnay 2014 *2 Golds* *Last Grab* (Reg \$18)	\$12.60	\$10.80	_____
Damiano Viognier 2014 *Gold Medal*	\$20	\$16.00	_____
Coquille Blanc 2014 *91 pts/2 Gold Medals* *New Release*	\$24	\$19.20	_____
Wild Thing Rendezvous Rosé 2015 *Gold Medal*	\$15	\$12.00	_____
Pinot Noir 2013 *Gold Medal*	\$30	\$24.00	_____
Oat Valley Carignane 2012 *Gold Medal* *Last Grab*	\$28	\$22.40	_____
Oat Valley Carignane 2013 *3 Double Golds*	\$28	\$22.40	_____
Wild Thing Zin 2013 *WE 90 pts/6 Gold Medals* *Last Grab*	\$19	\$15.20	_____
Pizazz Zin 2013 *New Release*	\$19	\$15.20	_____
Lingenfelder Zin 2013 *90 Points*	\$33	\$26.40	_____
Rocky Reserve Zin 2013 *Double Gold/Gold*	\$35	\$28.00	_____
Karma Zin 2012 *New Release*	\$30	\$24.00	_____
Peaceland Zin 2013 *Double Gold/Gold Medal* *Last Grab*	\$30	\$24.00	_____
Mancini Zin 2013 *New Release*	\$38	\$30.40	_____
Florence Petite Sirah 2012 *5 Gold Medals*	\$40	\$32.00	_____
Rockpile Reserve Petite Sirah 2012 *4 Gold's* *Last Grab*	\$40	\$32.00	_____
Rockpile Reserve Petite Sirah 2013 *New Release*	\$40	\$32.00	_____
Rockpile Reserve Cabernet 2012 *Gold Medal* *Last Grab*	\$50	\$40.00	_____
Rockpile Reserve Cabernet 2013 *New Release*	\$50	\$40.00	_____
King Ridge Cabernet 2012 *Gold Medal*	\$50	\$40.00	_____
Napa Reserve Cabernet 2009 *94 pts Wine* *Last Grab*	\$90	\$72.00	_____

Dessert!

Black Magic 2014 "Late Harvest" (375 ml) *NEW*	\$20	\$16.00	_____
1.5L Magnum Wild Thing Zin 2010 3 Golds/89 Wine Spectator	\$80	\$64.00	_____
(375ml) "half bottles" Wild Thing Zin 2013	\$12	\$9.60	_____



Carol Shelton Wines
3354-B Coffey Lane
Santa Rosa, CA
95403



Phone: 707-575-3441
Fax: 707-575-0245
E-mail: wines@carolshelton.com
www.carolshelton.com

