

# Jay Heminway Vineyard Manager and Winemaker

Green and Red Vineyards and Winery  
3208 Chiles Pope Valley Road, St. Helena  
*6,000 cases*

Jay Heminway grew up in New York City with wine on the table at dinner. He thinks he may even have been given tastes of wine mixed with water every now and then. When Jay went to college in Colorado he majored



in French and spent his junior year in France. That summer, before he attended the Sorbonne, he worked at Chateau Lascombes. Among the cellar and vineyard experiences Jay remembers were tasting numerous wines with sons of various wine distributors and helping to bottle a rosé. After college, Jay worked at Sherry-Lehman, Inc. in New York for a few months and then took off for California and graduate school at UC Berkeley as a sculptor. A Fulbright scholarship sent him to Italy, north of Milan, where art rather than wine commanded his attention. After he got back to Berkeley, Jay continued to sculpt. His first trip to Napa Valley was in the 1960's with Bill Hamilton, a friend of his sister's who had grown up in the Valley. Jay remembers their visiting Souverain, now Burgess, and Beaulieu, and .

When Jay was ready to leave the East Bay he fondly recalled his life in the country in Italy. So, he looked at property in Sonoma and Napa Counties and found a house in Chiles Valley with no hot water and a bad roof on 160 acres: "a perfect fixer-upper for the right price." There were a few almond trees and a Concord grapevine. The barn had burned down in the 1960's but an old truck and a 1950's Cadillac, well scratched by brush along the narrow drive, were included in the deal.

In 1970 Jay thought the first order of business would be converting the cesspool to

a septic tank, but when the contractor from Montelli Construction came out to start the job he said, "Gosh, what great soil. You should throw in a few acres of grapes." Jay put the house project on the back burner and in 1972 began to plant vineyard. The soil at Green & Red is decomposed chert (the red in the name) with a few veins of serpentine (the green). The soil is deep in some places but it is all very rocky and fast draining. Farm Advisor Jim Lider said the hills were where Zinfandel got its start and recommended Jay plant it at a time when older Zinfandel vines were being pulled in the Valley and vineyards planted to Cabernet. Jay went out and tasted the 1968 Zinfandel from Mayacamas grown in the Stags Leap area as well as Deaver Vineyards in Amador County from Sutter Home and was just fine with planting Zinfandel. In 1976 he applied for a winery permit.

The original Zinfandel at Green & Red grew on its own roots. No rootstock was available when Jay planted his original four acres of Chiles Mill Vineyard (now a total of seven acres), so he put the green growing potted plants from a Bakersfield nursery in the ground, spacing the plants 8' x 10' and watered the vines by hand for two or three years. Jay says it seems like that's all he did back then. He lugged water from a spring-fed redwood storage tank originally from

Chappellet. In the drought of 1976 Jay put in drip lines for irrigation, the kind that had to be moved by hand every six rows all summer. These lines were upgraded in 1978 when Jay planted another three acres of Zinfandel on its own roots. He also planted three acres of white grapes each year in what became the Catacula Vineyard in 1981, 1982 and 1983 on a site that had been in vineyard a hundred years before. In 1989 Jay planted some Syrah and Petite Sirah down by the house. Both were used to heighten color and deepen structure in the Zinfandel. Jay says they also added a blue fruit note to the wine when used judiciously (so as not to lose the Zinfandel). Ten years later in 1993 *phylloxera* necessitated a replant of both Chiles Mill and Catacula vineyards. This finished in 1999 with all the vines' rootstocks either 110-R or Paulsen 1103, which Jay quite likes, or 140 Ruggeri (although he says he loves St. George). The Zinfandel budwood came from 100 year-old vines from Ridge in Geyserville and Hambrechts in Healdsburg. Green & Red's Tip Top Vineyard, above Chiles Mill and Catacula, was also planted in the 1990's, to Zinfandel, Syrah and Petite Sirah and an automatic lazy man's gate of Jay's design was put in across the driveway.

Ridge's Zinfandels had inspired Jay to plant Petite Sirah for blending with Zinfandel.

Traditional field blends planted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries included Petite Sirah, Carignane and Mataro (Mourvèdre,) as well as other varieties. Jay has tried blending his Zinfandel with Barbera, Grenache, Mataro, and Sangiovese but has ended up budding over to Petite Sirah and Syrah. The Syrah Noir budwood he got from Phelps seems especially suited to the topography of Green & Red. The first Syrah it made was 400 cases of 2002, but now Green & Red is phasing out the Syrah. 100 cases of Petite Sirah were made in 2005 and 2006—which Jay thinks was probably a single effort that won't be repeated: it has been difficult to market.

When there were just four acres of vineyard, Jay did all the pruning and tractoring; after the mid-1980's with seven acres in production, he added some help. Today there are 31 acres in production. Although Green & Red used to disc for weed control, it now uses cover crops, a mower and, in the vine rows, a Clemens weeder. Green & Red will cease to irrigate after veraison unless there's a heat spike, giving the vines a quick drink of about two gallons each. It also practices careful canopy management. The vines are pruned by hand. After crown suckering, canes are sandwiched vertically to bilateral cordons. Jay calls Zinfandel a very finicky grape. You must be very attentive at harvest, more so,



he thinks, than with any other variety. If there is a heat spike, Zinfandel shrivels. It is thin-skinned, thinner even than Pinot Noir (Jay thinks Primitivo, as Zinfandel is known in Southern Italy, may be thicker-skinned and smaller-berried) and is prone to mildew. With up to an inch of rain at harvest, the berries will burst on the inside as the small clusters plump up. *Botrytis* can then easily set in.

Jay first sold his fruit to Cuvaison and then Philip Togni, but by 1977 had a bond for his own winery. He had been making home-made wine right along as well as taking a few classes and reading about winemaking.

He usually made Zinfandel, but once he made an Alicante with fruit from what is now Domaine Chandon, and once a mixed field blend from Trefethen, from a vineyard south of its winery. Jay says everyone in the Valley was very friendly. When he would go by Sutter Home for a half gallon of its red, Bob Trincherro was full of little tips. In 1980, Green & Red released its first vintage of 300 cases of 1977 Zinfandel. The wine hadn't gone through malolactic fermentation and was tart, but Jay says it has aged well.

The wines of Green & Red are made in a winery of Jay's design that has evolved from a capacity of five tons to fifteen. The Zinfandel fruit goes into an Italian de-stemmer and then an open-top temperature-controlled stainless fermenter where it cold soaks for four days. Green & Red used to do whole cluster fermentation; now with the de-stemmer it gets 40 percent whole berry—the same effect without stems (stems lower both the pH and the level of potassium). Yeast is added to a specific area in the tank, which has been warmed. Green & Red used native yeasts for a while but now prefers slow-acting yeasts such as Assmanshausen, a Pinot Noir yeast. After ten to fourteen days with punch-downs, the wine is pressed off at 0°Brix to +5°Brix and pumped to closed-top 800 gallon oak upright and stainless fermenters. Green & Red was keeping free run

and press wine separate but now combines the two. The new wine is inoculated for malolactic fermentation and moved to barrels. The wine then spends a year and a half in barrel, about 40 percent French and 60 percent American oak, 15 to 20 percent new, and is racked a couple of times a year. It is bottled in the spring of its second year. In 2000, to accommodate barrel storage, Green & Red had a 3,250 sq.ft. cave dug into the hillside behind the winery. The handsome entrance, door, and fittings were all designed by Jay, who has designed all the winery-related structures.

Currently, Green & Red offers seven wines for sale at the winery: three estate vineyard Zinfandels, a Syrah, Petite Sirah, and Sauvignon Blanc, and its proprietary blend, "Sobrante," which is 70 percent Zinfandel and 30 percent Syrah. Several months after bottling, Green & Red Zinfandel is ready to pour, with its flavors evolving over the course of the meal. Jay says he has been making wine for so long he can't imagine not doing it. And he really likes doing it because it requires a variety of skills, as making sculpture does. And, like sculpture, Jay says, "When people enjoy what you make it brings a lot of satisfaction." ■