



2007 wineries of the year | ARTISAN

Bella

The knotty, bush-trained vines of Sonoma's Dry Creek and Alexander valleys are among the oldest in North America. Compared to the neatly trellised rows of modern vineyards in the same regions, the vines look short, stubby and primordial. That's what attracted Scott and Lynn Adams to the land they bought in Sonoma in the early 1990s where they planned to grow grapes and raise their children.

As it turned out, their vineyards included a treasure trove of ancient zinfandel. After revitalizing the vines, the Adams sold grapes to old-vine hunting winemakers such as Joel Peterson at Ravenswood. (Peterson continues to make a Big River Zinfandel from their vineyards.) Inspired by the success others had with their vines, Scott Adams started taking a winemaking course in Santa Rosa. In 1999, he and his wife established Bella Vineyards to produce estate-grown zinfandel. They've since expanded their focus to include other varieties such as syrah and petite sirah, but it's Bella's vineyard-designated zinfandels that earned them a slot among our American Wineries of the Year.



The Adams own two exceptional vineyards, Lily Hill (85 years old) and Big River Ranch (110 years old). In 2004, winemaker Joe Healy coaxed a zinfandel with dazzling intensity from the vines at Lily Hill. Its brightness comes from an elegant interplay between wild berry flavors, violet aromas and a deep, savory character. It's balanced and firm, a pure expression of old-vine fruit from Dry Creek Valley.

Bella's '04 Big River Ranch, from vines in the Alexander Valley that were planted when William McKinley sat in the Oval Office, is markedly different. Where Lily Hill is bright, the '04 Big River has aromas of sweet plums and blackberries. That sweetness is balanced by an earthy anise character that brings a sense of complexity to the wine, a complement to roast lamb.

WINE & SPIRITS BUYING GUIDE 2008

BELLA VINEYARDS AND WINE CAVES

Founded: 1999 | Owners: Scott and Lynn Adams | Winemaker: Joe Healy | Acres owned: 80
Annual Production: 6,050 cases Estate grown: 95% | Known for: Old-vine zinfandels from Sonoma County | Location: Healdsburg, CA | Website: bellawinery.com (W&S 11/07)



TOP SCORING WINES

- 93** '04 Dry Creek Valley Lily Hill Estate Zinfandel
- 92** '04 Alexander Valley Big River Ranch Zinfandel
- 90** '04 Dry Creek Valley Belle Canyon Zinfandel