



Doug and Nancy Beckett walk the Peachy Canyon estate vineyards in Paso Robles.



Peachy Canyon 2016 Concrete Blanc Viognier, Paso Robles (\$26) is finished in concrete; in fact, Beckett had the tanks custom-designed. "It's also our first screwcap," he comments proudly. With a nose of white flowers, slate, buttered chamomile and lemon, the charm factor was immediate. A creamy palate and beautiful balance of alcohol and acidity reveal a fragrant and silken-textured example of this varietal. Partial ML and released three months after bottling. **93**



Peachy Canyon 2015 Westside Zinfandel, Paso Robles (\$22) is a blend of the winery's single vineyard wines, which are all small-production releases. This is a red that defines the new Zin elegance, but as also Beckett notes, "It's got some boost to it." Aromas of black olive, sage, blackberry and espresso announce its broad, fruit-forward and savory character. The liquid is mouth-filling—not dense as much as weighty with juiciness. Cinnamon, white pepper and dark cherry round out the finish. **93**

Raising the Flag for Zinfandel

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, FAMILY-OWNED PEACHY CANYON WINERY HAS CHAMPIONED THIS GRAPE IN PASO ROBLES

by Meridith May

America's heritage grape, Zinfandel, has taken several turns in style over the past three or four decades. "It's cyclical," offers Doug Beckett, proprietor of Peachy Canyon, the iconic Zinfandel producer in Paso Robles on California's Central Coast. "That over-the-top, high-alcohol, peppered, jammy Zin from the 1970s and 1980s has fortunately lost its lux," he adds.

What's back in focus now, says Beckett, is a quality that many thought would not—*could* not—be associated with this varietal: elegance.

We sat down with Beckett recently to discuss his view of Zinfandel's present as he continues to shape its future.

"Thank goodness most of us have stopped over-oaking, have halted the addition of residual sugar and are keeping the alcohol under 15 percent," he points out. "The days of 17.1 percent ABV is behind us. I don't want 'Port' with my porterhouse."

Even as its profile has been tamed and made more elegant, Zinfandel's popularity has waned. And while Paso continues to gain notoriety with wines made from Bordeaux and Rhône grapes, the region's Zin has been overlooked lately. Beckett would like to see the situation reversed. "At Peachy Canyon, we've stayed consistent in making varietally correct wines," he says, "but maybe because of lack of press, word hasn't quite reached the trade." A former President of ZAP—Zinfandel Advocates and Producers, the country's leading Zinfandel advocacy group—Beckett remains faithful to the organization's messaging: "ZAP has been a great vehicle for us."

A former school teacher from San Diego, Beckett was one of the Paso pioneers. He started making wine there in the early '80s and founded Peachy Canyon with his wife, Nancy, in 1988. With two vineyard sites in Paso's standout regions—Adelaida District and Templeton Gap—Beckett crafts stylish Zinfandels, along with complementary varietals Viognier, Petite Sirah and Alicante Bouschet.

Peachy Canyon has become synonymous with Zinfandel in Paso Robles, and if anyone can bring Zin back to the fore with consumers, it's Beckett. "This is my art form," insists the vintner. He certainly makes a statement with his well-crafted wines, and we're happy to feature two prominent picks from his current lineup. ■■

