

## New Wines, New Faces: Carol Shelton

*Impressive old-vine Zins from an old hand in California winemaking*

[Tim Fish](#)

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**Who:** After 19 years in the cellar at Windsor Vineyards in Sonoma County, Carol Shelton is hardly new to the industry, but her [eponymous wine label](#) has been around for only a few vintages. Shelton launched it in 2000 with the help of her husband, Mitch Mackenzie, a former software engineer.

**What to Drink:** The Zinfandel Mendocino County Wild Thing Old Vines Cox Vineyard 2003 (90 points, \$28, 800 cases) is exuberant and free-spirited, mixing floral and wild berry flavors with firm tannins and a complex aftertaste. The Zinfandel Rockpile Rocky Reserve Florence Vineyard 2003 (90, \$33, 375 cases) is tangy and intense, with concentrated raspberry pie and dried currant flavors supported by vibrant acidity and a tannin structure that accents a focused, cedary finish.

**Where:** Shelton uses mostly old-vine Zinfandel, and bottles four vineyard-designated wines from sites throughout California. The Cox Vineyard is near Ukiah in Mendocino County and was planted 50 years ago. The José Lopez Vineyard, planted in 1918, is in Southern California's Cucamonga Valley, while the century-old Rue Vineyard is in Sonoma's Russian River Valley. The youngster among the four is Rockpile Road Vineyard, planted in 1997 at 1,200 feet above Sonoma's Dry Creek Valley.

**Why Only Zinfandel?** "It's my favorite wine to drink," Shelton says. "I love its versatility. You can make anything from rosé to Port. My style is to be fruit-forward but balanced. Zinfandel is also a little less of a pretentious wine, and I'm not a pretentious person."

**What's on the Menu:** "I think [Zin] is the best food wine around," Shelton says. "But it depends on the style. If you make it with screaming alcohol and low acid, it won't work with any food. But if the Zin is balanced, it works with any big, strong-flavored food--it stands up beautifully." Shelton's favorites include grilled pork tenderloin in a raspberry marinade and grilled salmon with a Moroccan charmoula sauce.

**Coming Soon:** A fifth Zinfandel--the Dry Creek Valley Maple Vineyard bottling--will join the ranks starting with the 2004 vintage. Winemaker Gary Farrell formerly used the grapes. Shelton is diversifying in 2005 with the addition of a Syrah Dry Creek Valley Exhale Vineyard.

**Where to Find It:** [www.carolshelton.com](http://www.carolshelton.com)

