

WINE RECOMMENDATION

**Cline Cellars****2005 Ancient Vines Zinfandel
(Contra Costa County)**

Lumped into the larger Central Coast AVA until 1999 – and now included in the slightly smaller San Francisco Bay AVA – the century old vineyards that remain in Contra Costa County are shrinking daily. Pre-Prohibition, more than 6,000 acres were planted and the area was home to 27 wineries. Today some 1,500 acres are planted to Zinfandel, Mourvèdre, Carignane – “kerrigan” in local dialect – Alicante Bouchet, Chardonnay and Palomino, but not a single winery remains.

Old vines of all types are common here and give dense, richly fruited wines. Most vines are gnarly, dry farmed and have taken 75 to 120 years of head-pruning. Light sandy soil facilitates drainage and allows for deep root penetration by vines. Crops are small, with an average of 1.5 tons per acre.

This ruby red wine is not so much about Zinfandel as it is about terroir. With notes of farmlands, hay, and fresh rural air – like that of Central Marin after a rainstorm – as well as mineral and wet cement tones, it is only after some breathing that the full force of the fruit comes to life. Herbal notes of sage and tarragon play a supporting role as vivacious strawberry, rhubarb, and dried cranberry fruit notes take center stage. This is one great American wine, and is very fairly priced.

Reviewed November 20, 2006 by [Catherine Fallis](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Cline Cellars](#)

Vintage: 2005

Wine: Ancient Vines Zinfandel

Appellation: [Contra Costa County](#)

Grape: [Zinfandel](#)

Price: \$18.00

THE REVIEWER**Catherine Fallis**

Founder and President of Planet Grape LLC, a company committed to bringing the joy of wine, food, and good living into the lives of everyday people, Catherine is creator of the “grape goddess guides to good living,” a series of books, television presentations, seminars, and e-learning programs. The fifth woman in the world to become a Master Sommelier, grape goddess Catherine Fallis is still very much down-to-earth.