

The Wines of Orin Swift



David Phinney has a restless soul and a deft touch when it comes to making wine. He is the man behind the proverbial curtain of Orin Swift Cellars, which he began after taking a permanent hiatus from college in 1998. A fortuitous trip to Italy with a college roommate set him on a course that would eventually please palates from around the globe with wines he makes from around the globe.

In 1999, Phinney tried his winemaking hand with a couple of tons of zinfandel and a smidgen of cabernet sauvignon. But it was his idea of combining five different red wine varietals (zinfandel, cabernet sauvignon, syrah, petite sirah) for a wine he dubbed The Prisoner that won him critical acclaim and national attention.

Today, the Orin Swift brand – whose name is derived from Phinney’s father’s middle name (Orin) and his mother’s maiden name (Swift) - offers consumers a choice of wines running the international gamut, including six labels from California, and additional selections from France, Corsica and Argentina.

Here are few worthy of attention in our area.

California possesses a myriad of distinct microclimates for growing grapes, and Phinney has used many of them in the **2013 Orin Swift Mannequin**. It is full of the dizzying array of varietals (Chardonnay, Grenache Blanc, Viognier, Marsanne, Roussanne and Muscat) that has made Phinney famous. Dazzling aromas of ripe pineapple, coconut, and Myer lemon dominate the nose. The palate is lush with complex flavors of roasted fig, ripe apricot and white nectarine fruit. Underlying it all is the superlative mineral notes and wet stone that provide depth throughout the lengthy finish. **\$30**

A blend of Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino Grenache, Petite Sirah, and Syrah, primarily from hillside vineyards, is the foundation for the **2014 Orin Swift Abstract**, a remarkably jammy and delicious wine. The nose features aromas of black plums, red cherries and black raspberries, with a touch of lavender for good measure. Flavors of black stone fruit, blackberry jam, black raspberry, and Star Anise fall on the front of the tongue while notes of roasted coffee and dark chocolate glide in on the graceful finish. **\$32**

The **2012 Orin Swift D66 Grenache** is one of the offerings from Phinney’s South of France properties. Aromas of ripe cherries with seasoned French oak dominate the nose and lead gently into an enormous entry. Flavors of strawberries and watermelon with bright acidity and subtle briar fruit. The finish is long, concentrated and luscious. **\$40**

While Phinney made his mark with The Prisoner, he decided to sell the brand (along with another label) to the Huneus family of Napa Valley in order to finance other projects, **The 2013 Prisoner** from Napa Valley, now offered by The Prisoner Wine Company, is still worth hunting down. The wine is a blend of Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Charbono. The wine features enticing aromas of red cherry, espresso, and dark fig. Penetrating flavors of ripe raspberry, pomegranate and red berries blend together in the mouth for a succulent feel while juicy acidity provides a smooth and luscious finish. **\$36**