

Grower Profile: Gary Morisoli



Vineyard: Morisoli Vineyard

Owners: Gary and Melody Morisoli

AVA: Rutherford

Varietals Elyse Winery uses: Zinfandel & Cabernet Sauvignon

Back Story: Ray and Nancy met Gary and Melody in 1987 when they saw Gary driving a tractor on a hot summer afternoon and offered him something to drink. Not long after, one of the homes on the Morisoli's property became vacant and the Coursen family moved from their house across Highway 29 to the edge of the Morisoli vineyard. There they remained for the next 15 years in a house on hallowed Rutherford Bench soil, overlooking grape vines that made (and continue to make) the first wine under the Elyse label. With kids all around the same age, the families formed a close friendship that stands as the foundation of their business relationship.

Why it's Unique: Although Ray's winemaking skills are revered throughout the valley, he always attributes the wine's success to the grapes themselves and his longstanding partnerships with his growers. When handed the compliments for the wines, a very humble Gary Morisoli brushes them off and passes the credit to the soil. Despite the fact that his vines are meticulously kept, each row cared for with painstaking detail, and he spends more time on his tractor than your average grower, Gary seems to truly believe that he doesn't have much to do with the consistent quality of his crop. "I'm just doing the same stuff we've been doing forever," he said. Of course, we know that grapevines don't grow to be over 100 years old without a skilled shepherd looking out for them.

Deep Roots: Gary's not sure when his family bought the Rutherford property but he knows in 1902 his grandfather was born in one of its three houses. The Morisoli's had 10 acres back then, which his grandfather eventually doubled before Gary added another 37. Having grown up on the property, Gary

*Elyse
Winery*

said he learned how to farm by working alongside his father and grandfather in what he calls a “school of hard knocks” style as they were both very hard workers.

The vineyard, which today grows only Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon, has been home to many varieties. Until the 60s, the Morisoli grew a mix of Gamay, Carignan, Sauvignon Vert, Petite Syrah and Zinfandel. While some of the Zinfandel has been a fixture in the vineyard for over 100 years, the Cabernet Sauvignon was not planted until the early 80s, with the youngest vines dating back to the mid-90s. When asked how the vines survived prohibition when so many other vineyards were ripped out and planted to fruit and nut trees, Gary said they got around the problem by selling the grapes for “sacramental” winemaking purposes both around here and on the East Coast. He also noted the family kept a few wine barrels of their own in the basement.

Fun Fact: When asked what his favorite wine is, Gary responded “Pepsi.” He’s a farmer, not a wine connoisseur. Except, of course, when he’s mixing the two. In the tradition of the Italians, he does like to mix 2 parts Pepsi with 1 part red wine.

Ray Says: There are very few growers left in Napa Valley who have not only worked their vineyard, but have truly lived their vineyard. Gary is an artist.

What the Critics say about wines made from Morisoli grapes:



92 pts Elyse 2009 Morisoli Vineyard Zinfandel (Rutherford, Napa Valley)

2009 The pick of the latest Elyse crop by virtue of its **well-managed ripeness** and its incisive and keenly defined fruit, this deeply filled wine exhibits **exceptional focus and length** on the palate.

92 pts Elyse 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon, Morisoli Vineyard (Rutherford)

The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Morisoli Vineyard is a **beautiful**, if somewhat inward wine graced with **exquisite finesse**.

91 pts Elyse 2008 Zinfandel, Morisoli Vineyard (Rutherford)

The 2008 Zinfandel Morisoli Vineyard is a **compelling wine** graced with **expressive** dark red fruit, flowers, mint and licorice. It shows **gorgeous finesse**, plenty of mid-palate richness and terrific overall **balance**.

92 pts Elyse 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Morisoli Vineyard (Rutherford)

Even more **impressive** is the 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Morisoli... this wine possesses massive amounts of blueberry and blackberry fruit along with incense, licorice, and subtle smoky, toasty oak.



90+ pts 2006 Elyse Cabernet Sauvignon Morisoli Vineyard (Rutherford)

The 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Morisoli Vineyard, which comes from a **hallowed vineyard in Rutherford**, has a slightly more **saturated** ruby/purple color as well as a **classic bouquet** of crème de cassis, black cherries, dusty, loamy soil, herbs and spice. More **structured and layered** as well as fuller-bodied...



91 pts Elyse 2008 Morisoli Vineyard Zinfandel (Napa Valley)

Plenty of Zinny character in this lusty, spicy young wine. It **shows how well Zin ripens in a good Napa vineyard**.

92 pts Elyse 2005 Morisoli Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)

The vineyard is **in the heart of the Rutherford bench**. The wine is **rich** in fruit and tannins...**well-made**, and should age well, as Cabs from this stretch tend to have a long life. Cellar Selection



93 pts Elyse 2008 Morisoli Vineyard Zinfandel (Napa Valley)

Here is a very **solid**, slightly **sinewy** look at Zin that **hits the mark** in terms of defined blackberry fruit, spice and structure.

