



Winemaker, Alex Holman



Owner, Jim Rickards

Tasting Room of the Week:

J. RICKARDS WINERY

by Sue Straight, the Wine Wench

"Darn fine barn wine." Those four words (the slogan at J. Rickards Winery) say a mouthful about this tiny gem of a winery. Located just a couple of miles north of the small town of Geyserville (a handful of restaurants, a few wineries, a post office, a feed store and a P.G.&E. office – that's about it), J. Rickards Winery sits atop a small, vine-covered knoll. The narrow driveway gently winds up the hill between Zinfandel vines that were planted way back in 1908. If those old vines could talk, just think of the stories they could tell!

Jim and Eliza Rickards purchased the 60 acres that would eventually produce their wines way back in 1976. Originally, the Rickards bought the property to run cattle, hence their brand-like logo.

The winery itself is a small, unassuming barn-like building, surrounded with the requisite cement pads, stainless steel fermentation tanks, crusher-stemmer, press and other winery accoutrements. The tasting

room is tiny – a small bar, two barstools and an assortment of cases and bottles of wine take up part of the front of the winery's cellar. When you visit J. Rickards Winery, there is no doubt that you are visiting a working winery!

Another wonderful, unique aspect of J. Rickards Winery is their dedication to hands-on customer service. Chances are, if you visit the winery, you'll meet the winemaker, Alex Holman, or owners, Jim and Eliza Rickards.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Alex, the winemaker. Alex looks like he should be playing bass in a hard rock band (tall, dark, slim, with a long ponytail and high wattage smile), but his passion is making wine, but he's also passionate about playing baseball (he plays multiple positions in the local baseball league). This man really cares about the quality of his wines and the quality of time spent with visitors. He told me, "walk into my tasting room and I'll be working on wine barrels 20 feet away." Of course, when you come to visit, he'll stop working on wine

barrels and pour you some wine. And tell you stories about how he made it. How cool is that?

The wines at J. Rickards are absolutely delicious! Alex poured me a handful of mouth-watering wines. The following were my favorites:

2008 Azilex Sauvignon Blanc, \$18: One sniff and there's no doubt – this wine absolutely screams "Sauvignon Blanc!" Aromas and flavors of cut grass, melon, lemon grass and boxwood are all wrapped up in a luscious, juicy mouthfeel and linger through the finish.

2006 The Sisters Meritage, \$34: Oh... my... goodness! What a delicious, classy red. Aromas and flavors of black cherry, cassis, mocha and clean leather abound and this wine is opulently rich in the mouth. This is an \$80 wine in a \$34 dress!

Don't miss this place! J. Rickards Winery is open 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and by appointment. For more information, call (707) 758-3441 or visit the website at www.jrwinery.com.