



FROG'S LEAP

2015 MERLOT

RUTHERFORD NAPA VALLEY

A BRIEF HISTORY

A part of the Frog's Leap family since 1990, Merlot is one of the most complex and difficult wines that we make—and also one of the most rewarding. The Rutherford district of Napa Valley is home to about 25 different soil types, and these soils have mixed and morphed over the eons to paint a picture that resembles a kaleidoscope. Merlot thrives only on a very narrow slice of these soils. It needs lots of clay in the soil—what old-timers call “cold feet”—but the clay can't be too heavy, or it would delay ripening too much. If the soil is too weak, the fruit won't ripen; if too fertile, the vines become overly vigorous, shading the fruit and leading to unbalanced flavors. The grape requires a great deal of care in site selection and fine-tuning during the growing season to come to optimal ripeness, and our dry farming and organic practices play a key role in this.

No less care is required in the winery, where the variety is often miscast as a “baby Cab.” If one pushes the extraction too hard or overwhelms the wine with lots of new oak, it quickly gets anonymous, charmless, and disjointed. On the other hand, if one is too gentle with the winemaking—the “baby Pinot” approach—then the resulting wine can feel narrow and undeveloped, having never been allowed enough room to reach its potential. However, when we get this Goldilocks variety just right, it is very hard to beat—red fruit flavors, plums, and sage with an endless, supple texture. There is nothing quite like great Merlot. RW

ABOUT THE WINE

There are some years when Merlot is delightful and complete on its own and there are other years that the wine is simply more balanced and powerful with the aid of either or both of its cousins: Cabernet sauvignon or Cabernet franc. You can imagine the lively discussions amongst the winemaking team each year as we confront the possibilities of our new vintage of Merlot. The goal is simple: preserve the intense and beautiful red fruit character of Merlot while building the structure of the wine with Cabernet sauvignon or Cabernet franc.

In particularly fine years the Merlot's fruit aromas are intense enough to allow substantial additions of a Cabernet cousin which will deepen the flavors and add significantly to its age-worthiness. Such is the 2015 Merlot which gladly accepted nearly 20% of our best Cabernet sauvignon. With its beautiful dark raspberry aromas and silken yet powerful flavors, this was, without question, a wine we eagerly tucked away in the cellar. And now with a few years of age, it now begs for a well-seasoned pork roast on a bed of fall root vegetables. JW



THE BLEND

81% Merlot
19% Cabernet sauvignon

STATISTICS

organically-grown 23.3° brix at harvest
13.2% alcohol
5.7 g/L total acidity 3.55 pH

WINEMAKERS

John Williams
Paula Moschetti
Rory Williams

VINEYARDIST

Frank Leeds

BALANCE, RESTRAINT AND DEEP RESPECT FOR THE NATURAL EXPRESSION OF THE VINE