



FROG'S LEAP

1996 MERLOT

Napa Valley

THE BLEND

85% Merlot
10% Cabernet Franc
5% Cabernet Sauvignon

PRODUCTION

9,300 cases

RELEASE DATE

October 1998

STATISTICS

13.5% alcohol
6.2 gr/1 total acidity
3.6% pH

WINEMAKING

native yeast
aged 18 months in French oak
barrels

WINEMAKER

John Williams

ABOUT THE VINTAGE

An unseasonably warm winter with substantial rainfall launched the 1996 growing season with an early bud break. A cool spring was followed by intermittent rain during the May bloom period, causing shatter in many vineyards and reducing the potential crop size. A relatively warm summer with several heat spells speeded veraison and ripening, while a cooling trend in September allowed grape flavors to catch up with sugars, bringing the fruit into excellent balance. Smaller clusters and a light crop resulted in deeply flavored grapes, with the overall harvest down by 20-30%.

ABOUT THE WINE

For a winemaker, there is no substitute for becoming friends with one's vines. 1996 marks the seventh vintage of Merlot from Frog's Leap, and the evidence of the value of the ever-longer relationship has never been stronger. The 1996 Merlot is a powerful wine from a powerful vintage with deep cherry aromas and hints of dark chocolate and toasty oak. Yet the wine has a calm and gentle side - a certain grace that belies its size. It is beautifully balanced, firm yet supple and drinkable to a fault. It's actually a little difficult to write about this wine - it's a bit like boasting about an old friend but, once you get to know him, I think you'll agree, friendship is a pretty special thing.