



FROG'S LEAP

2023 SYRAH TRUCHARD VINEYARD CARNEROS, NAPA VALLEY

THE VINES

Almost all vineyards are beautiful to me—but a few stand out and are permanently etched in my memory. Many years ago, Tony Truchard drove me up the perilous switchbacks in his rickety Ford Bronco to the top of the highest knoll on his property to show me his newest planting: a block of Syrah on a small patch of volcanic soil. When I saw these baby vines clinging to the steep slope, the soil peppered with chunks of tufa (compressed volcanic ash), I knew I needed to someday make a barrel or two of wine from this spectacular site.

Tony is, of course, the man behind the fabulous vineyard from which we have sourced our Chardonnay since 1985. The decomposed shale and sandstone soils of our Chardonnay block, together with the volcanic series of the Syrah, represent just two facets of this complex ranch, which is itself a microcosm of the diversity within Carneros as a region. Long-time members of the Fellowship will recall the black cherry-scented Merlots from Truchard, which we often bottle separately, drawn from the high-elevation clay-silt loams at the northern end of the property. It is a special vineyard, where terroir announces itself through the wines, defying expectations.

The Syrah block had been under contract for many years to another winery whose winemaker was as passionate about the block as I am. When that winery sold out to private equity, the PE folks came to realize that they wanted nothing to do with great Syrah, and the fruit became available at the last moment. Tony called, and we said yes. While it clocks in just a touch above our normal alcohol and ripeness levels, the '23 is nevertheless packed with the black pepper spice, silky texture and high-tone aromatics of this noble and enigmatic grape. J.W

ABOUT THE WINE

The '23 Syrah came in quite late in the year, with plenty of sugar and supercharged flavors. While these characteristics aren't usually in our wheelhouse, we decided to work with what we'd been given, focusing on a low-and-slow fermentation dynamic, gentle extraction, and neutral oak during aging to temper the tendency of high-octane Syrah toward imbalance and grainy tannins. This approach paid off, and the finished wine showcases Syrah's classic smoky flavors, black pepper spiciness, and supple blue-black fruit, while maintaining freshness and suppleness in the tannins. We last made a Syrah in 2001—opening up those wines now reminds us of why this misunderstood grape is so much fun, and gives us confidence that the '23 will also go the distance



THE BLEND

100% Syrah
Truchard Vineyard Carneros,
Napa Valley

THE VINES

Planted 1998 in the sandy-textured volcanic soils of the Forward-Kidd complex.

STATISTICS

harvested: October 31
at harvest: 26.3 deg. Brix, 4.5 g/L TA, 3.74 pH
final: 15.4% alc., 5.91 g/L TA, 3.97 pH,
0.04% residual sugar
bottled: June 25, 2025
690 cases total

WINEMAKERS

John Williams
Rory Williams
Pablo Polanco

VINEYARDIST

Frank Leeds