



FROG'S LEAP

CHARDONNAY
NAPA VALLEY

It was a midsummer's evening in 1977 on the western shores of Lake Seneca, with the full moon just peaking over the eastern hills, when I tasted the 1970 Montrachet of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti for the first, and mostly likely, only time. Most serious wine people have memories like that. Amongst winemakers, there are usually wines they will never forget, wines that send them down a quixotic path in a drive towards an imagined goal that has only grown more delicious as the memory ages. It has been the source of some very bad winemaking decisions, for in trying to copy a wine, you will almost certainly dishonor it. No, the real value of these wines is the inspiration you derive from them and the accumulation of goals for making your own wines better.

I don't like most California Chardonnays. It seems the more highly rated they are, the less interest I have in them. They are too heavy, too alcoholic, too aromatic, too oaky, and almost always too sweet. I recognize most of these faults as faults that I also encountered while on the Montrachet trail and I sympathize with the winemakers who make them.

At one point, a few years ago, Frog's Leap stepped off the path and we now make a Chardonnay that is its own wine. I became much more conversational with the vines, we developed a different appreciation of fruit maturity, we adopted a very different approach to the wine's fermentation and aging, and we developed unviolated standards for the wine's balance and mouthfeel.

Is Frog's Leap Chardonnay Montrachet? No, of course not, and never will be. But it is its own wine, balanced and confident, delicious and age worthy—and that might be enough to inspire someone else one day. J.W.