



## FROG'S LEAP

### 2016 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

2016 gave us another outstanding classic Merlot continuing a tradition reaching back three decades. All of our 2016 reds have tremendous depth and richness across the flavors. Merlot with its well-deserved reputation for plushness particularly shines in a vintage like this. We added a splash of Cabernet sauvignon to stiffen the spine of the wine but make no mistake this is Merlot in all of its finery through and through.

Bright plummy and red berry flavors lead the way but it is the texture of the wine that will stay with you. I'm thinking of a lightly-seared veal chop with a creamy sauce of early fall morels myself. Drinkable right now? Absolutely. But don't be afraid to put down a few of these beauties in the cellar. You will thank me later. JW



#### THE BLEND

91% Merlot  
9% Cabernet sauvignon  
55% Red Barn vineyard, Rutherford  
15% Truchard vineyard, Carneros  
18% Williams-Rossi vineyard, Rutherford  
11% Navone vineyard, Rutherford  
1% Edano vineyard, St. Helena

#### STATISTICS

harvested: September 1 - 28  
harvest chemistry: 23.5° brix, 5.6 g/L, 3.56 pH  
final chemistry: 13.4% alcohol, 5.9.g/L total acidity,  
3.59 pH, 0.02% residual sugar  
bottled April 30 2018 6,197 cases produced

#### WINEMAKERS

John Williams  
Paula Moschetti  
Rory Williams

#### VINEYARDIST

Frank Leeds

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