



## FROG'S LEAP

# 2018 CABERNET SAUVIGNON WILLIAMS ROSSI

RUTHERFORD NAPA VALLEY

WINEMAKER NOTE FROM RORY WILLIAMS

### A BRIEF HISTORY

Over the years, we've spoken at length about our farming practices: our early adoption and advocacy for organic farming, our dogged insistence on dry farming all our grapes, and the attention to detail that those practices require of us. These practices are designed to encourage and emphasize the natural differences of soil, water, climate, and microflora that make each vine different from the next, and give rise to idiosyncrasies in wines from different sections of a vineyard. At Frog's Leap, our effort always extends toward making wine honestly, where a given vintage of wine is always true to its time on the vine and the place where it was grown.

It was with this philosophy that we approached a new wine, the Williams Rossi Cabernet Sauvignon. In 1995, we were introduced to siblings Louise and Ray Rossi and their historic Rossi ranch, situated at the northern end of the famed western bench in Rutherford. By 1997 we were helping Ray farm the ranch, taking all the fruit from the vineyard. In 2007, Frog's Leap acquired the ranch and began to plant vines in areas that had long lain fallow and replant diseased blocks. Rossi is a complicated ranch with a kaleidoscope of different soils—ancient rivulets of heavy sand and gravel streak east-west though rich gravelly-clay loams, marked by almost imperceptible changes in elevation. While heavy pure clay dominates the westernmost area, a little to the north that clay mixes with gravel to create our best Merlot ground. In other words, the stage was set for a ranch whose wines could speak to the heart of our core purpose of cherishing the different and the idiosyncratic, if we were willing to make the effort. The Williams Rossi Cabernet Sauvignon is the culmination of that effort.

When making a reserve-style wine, a winemaker will usually look to select his or her "best" barrels in the blend. For my dad and me, the basis for that selection is made in the vineyard. Each year, our eyes are focused on how the vines planted in each soil type are adapting to the conditions posed by the vintage, and we head into harvest with that knowledge. When sampling, we select areas of the ranch—largely defined by specific areas of soil—that are exceptionally delicious that year, and ferment them separately. These mini-fermentations, usually so small that they are done in individual barrels, are then selected down to the best barrels after the wines are complete. The specific blend will change from year-to-year as different areas respond to vintage conditions, giving a wine whose character is wholly rooted in the connection that our family has to our home here in Rutherford.

### THE BLEND

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, South Creek block (SE corner gravel bar), Rossi Vineyard, Rutherford  
*Planted 2008 in very gravelly loam, Clone 7 on St. George. Harvested September 21st*

10% Cabernet Sauvignon, North Creek block (N gravel patch), Rossi Vineyard, Rutherford  
*Planted 2008 in clay loam with heavy gravel topsoil, Clone 7 on St. George. Harvested Sep. 25th*

10% Cabernet Sauvignon, "Hilltop" block (S gravel bar), Rossi Vineyard, Rutherford  
*Planted 2010 in gravelly loam, Mendoza clone on St. George. Harvested September 24th*





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CONTINUED

### ABOUT THE WINE

2018 was one of the most picture-perfect vintages we've ever experienced in Napa: plenty of winter rain, a gentle, moderate growing season, and a long, bountiful harvest period with lot of morning fog and afternoon sunshine. The areas of Rossi with the richest content of gravel in the soil typically host our vines with the lowest yields and smallest berries. In a moderate year like '18, those small berries get extended time on the vine and provide exceptional intensity. One quarter of the fruit was fermented in new oak barrels, with the remainder in steel and concrete. The wine shows rich, generous black fruit and great balance—both characteristic of the moderate vintage. Extended aging in both barrel and bottle have given the wine time to knit its dimensions together into a seamless example of the famed Rutherford dust.

### ABOUT THE SOILS

**South Creek** – The 2018 is drawn from two areas, both very heavy in gravel content. South Creek block, comprising the majority of the blend, is defined by a massive wedge of very fine gravel that enters from the southeast. While the vines at either end of the rows grow a bit bigger, most of the vines in the centers of the SE rows are very low-yielding, with small clusters and tiny berries. The high gravel content means that the soil drains water extremely well, and the vines in that area exist at the limit of our ability to dry farm, with the vigor much reduced. The smallish vines can suffer from extremes of drought and/or temperature during a hot growing season; however, in a moderate year like 2018, they come into their own and provide some of the most intense—even chewy—fruit on any of our ranches.

**Hilltop** – A similar story accompanies the gravel bar in Hilltop block, which is narrower than its cousin in South Creek. Hilltop is our cheeky name for a block that sits at the center of the ranch, near enough, and sports an average elevation an astounding 2 feet higher than the rest of the ranch (wait...why aren't you astounded?). This block was the one of the first to be redeveloped into Cabernet after we acquired the ranch, and I still vividly remember the fruit from its first crop coming up the sorting line in 2012 and thinking—this is a game changer. Its profile is less tannic than South Creek, but more high-toned and balanced.

**North Creek** – The surprise element in 2018 was North Creek. This selection came from the north end of the block, which has more in common with the Merlot block next door than it does the rest of the Cabernet blocks, with a heavy layer of gravel overlaying clay loam. The long growing season gave this section extra depth and character, and it was a standout that demanded inclusion when we were selecting barrels for the final wine.

### STATISTICS

harvest chemistry: 23.9 ° brix 6.7 g/L total acidity, 3.37 pH  
final chemistry: 14.2% alcohol, 6.3 g/L total acidity, 3.58 pH,  
0.03% residual sugar

bottled December 2 2020

490 cases produced, from 20 barrels

### WINEMAKERS

John Williams  
Rory Williams  
Pablo Polanco

### VINEYARDIST

Frank Leeds



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