



FROG'S LEAP

2019 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.

ABOUT THE WINE

As we are our own most enthusiastic consumers of our older Merlots, we get a front-row seat of the beautiful arc of development that these wines display. While older Cabernets often blossom and expand aromatically while the texture softens, our Merlots gain additional depth and richness to their texture as they age.

Great vintages only increase this potential, and 2019 is a great vintage of Merlot. Perfect rainfall and a long, warm growing season set the stage for a powerfully structured wine that is built for the long haul, with aromas of black cherry, ripe plum, coffee, and dried herbs. Drink now with plenty of air—a jaunt in a decanter wouldn't be out of order—or tuck it away for a few years before enjoying with roast chicken and mushrooms. RW



VINES

100% Certified organic and dry farmed. The soils in the Merlot block at Red Barn have a relatively shallow layer of loam and gravel on top, with deep layers of clay below, the remnants of the outer edge of an ancient alluvial fan. The Merlot soils at Rossi are younger (geologically), and are primarily clay with very little loam

THE BLEND

93% Merlot
7% Cabernet Sauvignon
86% Red Barn vineyard, Rutherford
14% Rossi vineyard, Rutherford

WINEMAKERS

John Williams
Paula Moschetti
Rory Williams
Pablo Polanco

STATISTICS

harvested: September 20th-24th (Rossi)
& October 4th-21st (Red Barn)
harvest chemistry: 23.0° brix, 5.4g/L total acidity, 3.70pH
final chemistry: 13.4% alcohol, 5.5g/L total acidity, 3.65pH,
0.01% residual sugar
bottled May 27 2021 4,790 cases produced

VINEYARDIST

Frank Leeds

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