



FROG'S LEAP

2022 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, the locus point for our Merlot, 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

Drought conditions continued unabated for a third straight year in 2022, and its effects continued to ripple through our Merlot vines, which posted historically low yields once again. A warm summer hastened ripening somewhat during the growing season, but things got a little weird in the second week of September. A week-long, historically extreme heat wave passed through Napa, punctuated by temperatures in Rutherford approaching 118°. I'm not going to lie, we were a little nervous, and I was honestly stunned at how beautifully balanced the wines were when we sat down to blend the '22. In fact, there seemed to be a silver lining to the heat—while our Merlot wines typically need 9-12 months of bottle aging to come out of their shell, the '22 is much more fruity, open and accessible early on than what is typical. The wine tastes like cranberry sauce at Thanksgiving, with tons of richness and a developing dark herb or tobacco note that bodes well for the future. Far from being merely an early bloomer, we are excited to see this wine develop over the long term, as it has the bones to make it work. —RW



THE BLEND

92% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon
Rutherford AVA

65% Red Barn Vineyard, Rutherford
21% Truchard Vineyard, Carneros
12.5% Williams Rossi Vineyard, Rutherford
1.5% Martinson Vineyard, Redwood Valley

THE VINES

Certified 100% organic.

STATISTICS

harvested: September 2nd – October 17, 2022
harvest chemistry: 23.8° brix, 6.3 g/L TA, 3.53 pH
final chemistry: 13.8% alc., 6.0 g/L TA,
3.68 pH, 0.00% RS
bottled: June 7th, 2024
3,694 cases produced

WINEMAKERS

John Williams
Rory Williams
Pablo Polanco

VINEYARDIST

Frank Leeds

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