

Fall-Winterer 2008

CABERNET FRANC THE FOURTH RESERVE WINE

Even though it doesn't say it on the label or in the shape of the bottle we consider the Cabernet Franc our fourth 'Reserve' wine. When my father planted it thirty years ago I don't think he ever imagined that we would be bottling it as a single vineyard wine. Now we have an as yet unresolved debate going at the winery as to which Bordeaux varietal is our strongest. A case can be made for each of the three, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot. Each has received scores in the nineties for every bottling in the last five vintages from Robert Parker. To confuse matters further our blend Mernet has garnered the highest ratings of the four reserve wines in that same five years.

Fortunately unresolved debating makes me very thirsty, I think I'll go and open a bottle of wine...ah, that's better.

Not being able to see into the future in 1975 or even at the time of the great replanting of 1997 we did not put in much Cabernet Franc, thinking that it would be used primarily for blending. Wrong-o. The '01-'04 bottlings of Estate Cabernet Franc became our hottest and most allocated wine. We couldn't even put the '04 on the order form on the website.

Blessedly, Mother Nature gave me a wonderful idea at the conclusion of the '03 harvest. We ended up with a record Merlot crop even though we had to abandon a two- acre block at the top of the 'Upper Bowl' because it got too ripe before we could pick it. Needing more Franc and less Merlot the decision to graft over that block to Franc seemed like a no-brainer. Walking into the vineyard the day after the grafting was done was one of the more shocking sights I have ever seen. The vines had been cut off at the knees and for all intents and purposes looked quite dead. "I will surely pay for this in the after-life", I thought, "what was I thinking".

Thankfully vines are semi-miraculous life forms. Within weeks of the butchering, new shoots were coming out of the seemingly lifeless stumps. There was even a teeny crop in '04 and a shockingly robust yield in '05. No wonder ancient cultures worshipped these plants.

Happily for the first time I have been able to show the Cabernet Franc to the trade and public and yes, put it back on the website. So remember in this time of economic madness and stress great wine makes everything better.

Cheers,

Michael Keenan