



2012 Napa Valley Cabernet franc

MATTHIAS
SON

Cabernet franc can be Pinot-like in that it is very representative of the site where it is grown, and at it's best it is feminine, intriguing, and difficult to understand. Beguiling. We focus completely on the mineral and herbal aspects of it's character and end up with a wine that somehow manages to be both delicate and powerful, aromatic, long, and with an ethereal lightness that comes from being low in alcohol. It's a completely different expression of Cabernet franc than one usually finds in the new world, inspired by the wines of Chinon, but something totally unique in and of itself—a true representation of the terroir of our Napa vineyard, showing a feminine side of Napa that is rarely seen these days

The wine is 100 percent Cabernet franc. 2012 was our third crop from the vineyard (we grafted the budwood onto mature Merlot vines in 2008). It should have been the fourth crop, but we lost the entire crop due to a heat spike in 2010. The spring rains of 2012 allowed us to dry farm the Cabernet franc, helping slow the sugar accumulation, which facilitated lower alcohol in the wine.

The wine was fermented 50% whole cluster and 50% destemmed and crushed with rollers. We used an open top tank, with manual punch downs twice a day. We pressed just after dryness, and aged the wine in neutral barrels for 20 months.

The pH is 3.70, the TA is 6.5 g/L, and the alcohol is 12.5%. 48 cases were made.

The 2012 Cabernet franc has distinct aromas of dry leaves in the fall, dried chili peppers, and sage, with plummy fruit. The tannins are very soft in the mouth, with an iron-like minerality on the finish. It's light on the palate but firm at the same time—it's a wine with many contradictions that is hard to describe with tasting notes. Easy drinking, but incredibly complex. Great with food.

The Vineyard

The Cabernet franc represents 2 rows in our home vineyard in the Western Oak Knoll area of Napa Valley. The clonal selection was brought from Bordeaux in the late 90s by someone who will remain unnamed—he refers to it as “clone X.” It was grafted onto 15 year old Merlot vines. Managed using organic methods and dry-farmed, with fruit trees at the ends of the rows, the vines are serenaded throughout the season by kids, coyotes, owls, bees, and the occasional roar of one of our old tractors.