



2017 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

In the tradition of Cabernet sauvignon, ours includes a small amount of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, and is blended from six vineyards throughout the Napa Valley. The three AVAs are Coombsville for structure and black fruit, Rutherford for savory Cabernet characters and bright fruit, and Oak Knoll for soft fruit. It is a Napa Cab of the old school, a blended wine, age-worthy, complex, and begging for a steak off of the grill.

2017 was mostly a mild year, with just one heat spell close to harvest to keep us on our toes. Flavors recovered nicely after the heat broke, and surprisingly the sugars stayed low, allowing us to pick fruit with low sugars and beautiful natural acidity. Luckily, we were completely finished with harvest by the time the fires hit, and we were able to press our last tanks and wrap up the vintage while the helicopters flew overhead dropping water on the nearby flames. The vintage gave us an elegant Cabernet, a bit more fine-boned than usual, but not at all shy, instead full of joyful flavor...a wonderful exploration into a style of Cabernet even more reminiscent of the early days of Napa than is typical even for us.

The fruit was fermented in small open-top tanks and either punched down or pumped over twice per day, depending on flavor; we don't strive for a high rate of extraction, instead choosing to preserve the freshness and high-toned aromatics. Since the fermentation temperatures were cool, the fermentations were long and slow, mostly lasting around three weeks. The wine was pressed at dryness, blended immediately, and aged for 20 months in a combination of mostly used and a few new barrels (<20% new French oak).

The nose shows abundant red fruits, lots of bright cherry along with bramble-berries, such as blackberry, cranberry, mulberry, and framed with hints of mineral/herbal characters such as graphite, cedar, and pencil shavings. The palate is vibrant and fresh, with light tannin and beautiful acidity. Decanting is highly recommended.

The blend is 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot, 2% Cabernet Franc. Alcohol is 13.0%, TA is 5.9 g/l, pH is 3.78. 1995 cases produced.

The Vineyards

The Dead Fred Vineyard in Coombsville sits on rocky volcanic soil. Its south-western exposure causes it to pick up heat during the day, and the proximity to the mouth of the Napa Valley keeps the nights cool. We leased it in 2012.

The York Vineyard is in the heart of Rutherford, on the classic gravelly alluvium known to create the famous "Rutherford Dust" character. We leased it in 2013.

The Helen's Gate Vineyard is the home of Arthur Berliner and Marian Lever. It sits on an east-facing hill along Whitehall Lane in the Rutherford District of Napa Valley. We planted the vines in 2009.

The Red Hen Vineyard is on rocky alluvium next to Dry Creek, in the Oak Knoll District. Cool breezes and dry rocky soil combine to create structure and ripe fruits. We trade fruit for viticultural services.

The Bengier Vineyard (formerly Vare) is also on Dry Creek, in the Oak Knoll District, but on gravelly soils in the mouth of the canyon. The cool air drainage and short fall days as the sun is blocked by the redwoods result in light aromatic wine. We have over-seen the farming of the vineyard since 2002.

The Matthiasson Vineyard is on loamy alluvial soil on the west side of the Oak Knoll District, just south of the Red Hen Vineyard. It is the coolest of the vineyards, receiving morning fog and afternoon sea breezes most summer days. This is our home vineyard.