

2009 PETER FRANUS ALBARIÑO NAPA VALLEY



Vineyard:	Stewart Vineyard
Composition:	100% Albariño
Harvest Date:	September 21, 2009
Fermentation:	20 days at 49°, VL3 Yeast
Oak aging:	Neutral barrels 3 months
Bottling Date:	February 10, 2010
Production:	410 cases

As you enter Napa Valley from the south, you are in Carneros, driving on the highway that runs right through the old Stewart Dairy property. To your left on the hill, are the famous “Oreo” cows munching grass, and to your right is the vineyard. The unique terroir of this site has provided me with stunning Sauvignon Blanc since 1999, wonderful Merlot more recently, and for the first time in 2009, Albariño.

One of my favorite American authors, Kurt Vonnegut, once said that life is a series of accidents. We began our 2009 harvest on September 8 with our Stewart Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc. Right around that time as a result of unanticipated developments, there was no home for the Albariño grown on the property, and suddenly it was being offered to me. Did I have to think about it? Of course not! Considering that aromatic whites are among my most favorite wines, I could hardly say no. Although not the first Albariño planting in the United States, it was the source of the first commercial release of the variety in 1999.

Albariño has grown on the northwest coast of Spain and Portugal for centuries, resulting in wonderful food-friendly wines known for their enticing aromatics, vivacious crispness, and intriguing complexity. If ever a wine begs for food, this is it. It has gained in popularity in the States in the last few years, and for us to have one of the few domestic versions produced in this country is exciting.

How did we make the wine? Our processing follows the successful results with our Sauvignon Blanc. Grapes arrive and proceed to the press without any crushing, and the resulting juice ferments in stainless steel for roughly three weeks. We selected a particular yeast strain that would enhance the aromatics of the wine. Aging takes place for three months in completely neutral French oak barrels. The sur-lie aging adds a surprising textural component that serves to balance the acidity of the wine.

Because of the foods we enjoy, I can see this wine becoming a favorite in our portfolio. Medium straw in color, the wine offers aromas of nectarine, ginger, orange blossom, mineral and stone, and a hint of wintergreen. Acidity is present, lively, and reflective of the nature of the grape. The flavors reflect the nose, and persist well into the finish.

One of our fondest memories of Spain is having lunch a few years ago in Costa Brava, overlooking the Mediterranean. My main dish was baby calamari sautéed with a sprinkling of garlic and olive oil. Pure and simple. I still think about it, and this wine is one that would be the perfect accompaniment as well as the embodiment of why so many of us got into the wine business.