

## 2007 PETER FRANUS NAPA VALLEY MERLOT



Vineyards: Stewart Vineyard Carneros  
Truchard Vineyards Carneros

Composition: 95% Merlot 5% Cab Franc

Harvest Dates: Sept 27, Oct 11

Fermentation: 10 days average, up to 80°

Maceration: 20 days total before pressing

Oak aging: 18 months  
French 60% new

Bottling Date: May 7, 2009

Production: 677 cases

Poor downtrodden Merlot! It's hard to believe that some of the most highly regarded and sought after wines in the world come from Pomerol and St. Emilion, the land of Merlot. It fascinates me that the grape has taken a bad rap since it often translates into the very things that people love about red wine—fruitiness, juiciness, and suppleness.

As you know, Stewart has provided me with outstanding Sauvignon Blanc since 1999. A client for whom I consult has been producing a very successful Right Bank blend containing a good percentage of Stewart Merlot. I knew how good the fruit could be, so given the opportunity to work with some beginning in 2006, I said yes. This unique site in Carneros suppresses vigor so berries are typically small and shoot growth modest, producing wines with excellent concentration and wonderfully ripe flavors. I began to work with Truchard's Cabernet Franc in 2005, and it is arguably the most successful grape on his property. Classic, beautiful, and aromatic, it displays how wonderful the variety can be.

2007 is a wonderful vintage overall. In general the reds are lush, mouth-filling and generous. A long temperate growing season in Napa Valley resulted in small, intensely flavored grapes harvested under near ideal conditions. The crop was somewhat smaller than usual.

As for the wine. Dark ruby in color, it offers an inviting, perfumed, and forward nose of spice, red currant, sweet toasty oak, coffee and hints of herb. Ripe plum and black cherry flavors are rich, round and complex with a weight and density not often seen in Merlot. There are very few "edges" to the wine, yet there is a structure with good acidity that sneak up on you to support the long finish and suggest some longevity.

You've heard it many times from me as to what I think constitutes an outstanding wine. When I taste and the word "delicious" unconsciously comes to mind, there's a pretty good chance that I've achieved my goal. A desire to go back and have another sip and another, reaffirm. The Stewart Vineyard has provided me with outstanding grapes for over a decade, and the Merlot has been remarkably consistent and exciting. I am confident that wines of this quality will serve to put Merlot back on the pedestal where it deserves to be!