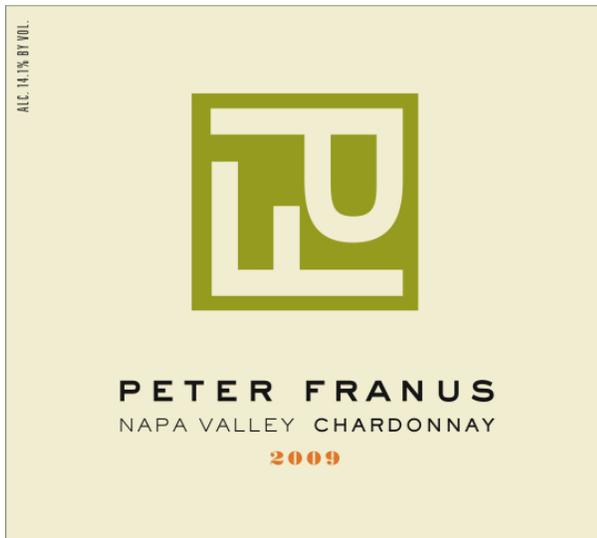


2009 PETER FRANUS NAPA VALLEY CHARDONNAY



Vineyards:	Stewart Vineyard
Composition:	100% Chardonnay Clone "Robert Young" 100% Carneros
Harvest Date:	September 23, 2009
Fermentation:	Barrel fermentation 12 days at 60 °
Oak aging:	100% French Oak 1/3 new 10 months
Bottling Date:	August 17, 2010
Production:	70 cases

First it was Sauvignon Blanc in 1999. Merlot in 2006. And in 2009, Albariño and the first miniscule crop of Chardonnay. Stewart Vineyard in Carneros has become one of my primary grape sources—and there is very good reason. The consistent quality that emerges each year is stunning. All the variables that influence grape quality—clone, soil, temperature, cultural practices, have coalesced here to make it a unique and special property. When offered the first crop of Chardonnay, I had no idea on the style of wine that would result, but given the wonderful wines that have emerged over the years, I was optimistic. I was not let down!

I often pose the question—if it's a special birthday or occasion and you have to grab a certain wine, what would it be? It would probably surprise many of you that my choice would most often be white Burgundy. Perhaps I am drawn to the elusiveness of great Chardonnay. When it realizes its potential, it offers unique flavors and aromas found in no other wine. You often hear that Pinot Noir is the most difficult wine to produce. I nominate Chardonnay as equally difficult.

2009 will be discussed and evaluated in two ways—before the rains and after the rains. It was a beautiful, mild, growing season with slow, great flavor development in the grapes. Everything before the rains arguably are equal to anything of this decade. We harvested a meager amount—1.25 tons—of Chardonnay on September 23. The tiny berries were whole-clustered pressed, settled overnight and then racked to barrel. Each barrel was inoculated with a yeast strain chosen for its ability to ferment slowly and not generate much heat, critical in barrel fermentation. The goal was to preserve aromatics and add complexity. The wine was aged sur-lie for 10 months.

The Chardonnay we produced in 2009 is very light golden in color. Aromas are mineral—that wet-stone, gravel, non-fruity component—with apple, cardamom, vanilla, toasted hazelnut, white pepper, and a slight hint of orange peel. It is not tropical, tutti-frutti, or sweet. What also excites me about this wine is that although it offers rich flavors, its acid and laser beam focus reign it in, keeping it alive and refreshing as well as sustaining the long finish. The wine intrigues and entices you back to explore some more.

In case you didn't notice, I am clearly excited by this wine. I write these notes on the eve of the harvest of our 2010 Chardonnay, one of the days I am most looking forward to this year. I tend to be very modest in the evaluation of the wines I have produced in the last 30 years. I have no trouble putting the 2009 Chardonnay in my top ten. Where it ranks, I will keep a mystery.