

2009 PETER FRANUS RED HILLS LAKE COUNTY ROSÉ



Vineyard:	Fore Family
Composition:	50% Grenache 50% Syrah
Harvest Date:	September 30, 2009
Fermentation:	60 days at 50°
Oak aging:	Neutral puncheons, 3 months
Bottling Date:	April 29, 2010
Production:	220 cases 750ml

In 1999 I began getting Sauvignon Blanc from the outstanding Stewart Vineyard, managed by Jim Fore and Doug Hill. Right around the same time, Jim took a gamble by purchasing some property in Lake County, about 12 miles north of Napa Valley's Calistoga. The spectacular site is on Cobb Mountain at an elevation of 3000 feet. The air is sweet and refreshing and the setting wonderfully peaceful. Well-drained red volcanic soils and summer nights that cool dramatically are yielding some of the finest Grenache and Syrah grown in California.

When a little extra fruit presented itself in 2009, we thought, why not a rosé? The wonderful pale pink roses of southern France came to mind with their lively, refreshing and spicy qualities, perfect for quaffing on those warm summer evenings. We were dedicated to making the wine in a true rosé style, not like so many impostors that are out on the market. Those are the result of "saignee" where winemakers "bleed" off some juice from a tank of crushed grapes in order to concentrate what remains in the tank. The resulting wines are typically high in alcohol and often unbalanced.

We treated our grapes as if we were making a white wine. Harvested lower in sugar, a 50/50 blend of Syrah and Grenache went into the press and during that brief two hour cycle, we extracted just the amount of "pink" we were looking for—a pale pink, sometimes described as salmon-colored. It's a beautiful hue to take in and appreciate.

After pressing and settling, we selected a yeast that would enhance aromatics and ferment at a cold temperature to preserve the freshness and fruitiness of the wine. The fermentation was very slow—almost painfully so—and lasted just about two months. As we do with our Sauvignon Blanc to create some creaminess and texture, the wine went into old cooperage for three months to age sur lie.

I will put it simply. I find this wine absolutely delicious, and have a sense that we might be drinking more of this wine than any other over the next six months. Many think "sweet" when they see "pink." On the contrary, this wine is bone dry with excellent acidity. There is a spice and subtle pepper component that comes from the Grenache and Syrah adding an extra degree of complexity to the nose

I know I've used the vision before, but it deserves repeating—think southern France or Spain, relaxing in the shade while you sip a chilled glass of rosé and gaze out on the majestic Mediterranean. Life is good!