

2010 PETER FRANUS NAPA VALLEY SAUVIGNON BLANC



Vineyards:	Stewart Vineyard
Composition:	100% Sauvignon Blanc Musque Clone 100% Carneros
Harvest Date:	September 29, 2010
Fermentation:	18 days at 50°
Aging:	80% Stainless Steel 20% Neutral puncheons
Bottling Date:	April 4, 2011
Production:	729 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 are the 15-year-old Sauvignon Blanc vines that are frankly becoming pretty famous. All those variables—wind, restrictive soil, clone, temperature, as well as the unknowns—have an effect on the grapes, resulting in wines with tropical, mineral, and elusive notes most reminiscent of France’s Loire Valley.

Growers Jim Fore and Doug Hill planted the vineyard for me, and it produced its first crop in 1999. I have worked with it ever since. Although of course there is vintage variation, every year has delivered a delicious wine, always a testament for me of the right grape variety growing in the right area.

2010 was one of the most intriguing and unusual vintages in my 30-year career in Napa Valley. The coolest summer in decades was followed by scorching heat in August. As a result, some clusters shriveled and yields were down 10 to 15%. On the positive side, a cool, long growing season allowed great flavor development at lower sugars and wines that tend toward more elegance. This was, in fact, the latest we ever began our Sauvignon Blanc harvest.

We continue to follow the winemaking strategy begun in 2003. Grapes proceed to the press without any crushing, and the resulting juice ferments in stainless steel for roughly a month. We select a yeast strain known to enhance the aromatics of the wine. We did, however, make an adjustment in 2010 to our typical procedure. Rather than age the entire lot sur-lie in old puncheons as in previous vintages, only 20% received that treatment. We felt the wine already had sufficient richness of flavor and texture.

Our 2010 is pale straw in appearance. I find this wine one of the most intriguing and exotic Sauvignons that I have made. Curiously enough, it was slow to reveal all its charms. The nose is wild! Exotic and forward aromas of honeysuckle, vanilla, tangerine, lemongrass, and tropical fruits leap from the glass. A floral element emerges as well. Despite the rich impression, appropriate acid and minerality sustain wonderful balance in the wine. This wine is a definite crowd-pleaser.

People continually ask which is my favorite or best wine. I never answer the question directly, but I do say that we probably drink more Sauvignon Blanc than any of our other wines. That’s because it is so lively, refreshing, and delicious, and goes so well with so many of the foods we enjoy.