

2007 PETER FRANUS RED HILLS LAKE COUNTY RED WINE



Vineyard:	Fore Family Vineyard
Composition:	Syrah Grenache Mourvèdre
Harvest Dates:	Oct 9 & 11
Fermentation:	15 days average, up to 80°
Oak aging:	22 months 100% French Oak 40% new
Bottling Date:	September 8, 2009
Production:	70 cases 750ml

Jim Fore has provided me with stunning fruit from the Stewart Vineyard in the Carneros region of Napa Valley since 1999. First it was Sauvignon Blanc, then Merlot, and most recently Albariño. Twelve years ago, well before many were seriously considering the potential of Lake County, he took a gamble and purchased property on the top of Cobb Mountain. The vineyard site is located a few miles east of Sonoma County and a dozen miles north of Napa Valley's Calistoga.

This is a spectacular property, situated at 3000 feet elevation. Soils are thin in the Red Hills and drain instantly. The elevation places vines well above the hot summer heat trapped in the valleys below, and aligns them in the path of cool westerly Pacific breezes. At the same time, there is paradoxically greater solar intensity that has some magical and perhaps inexplicable effect on the grapes. Because of the high elevation, the differential between day and night time temperatures is dramatic. This results in grapes with intense flavor and color development.

This is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and peaceful vineyard sites I have ever worked with—and that's 30 years of experience talking!

Growing conditions were superb in 2007. It got off to an early start and a temperate summer provided long slow ripening, resulting in full, lush, and generous wines. As for our 2007 Rhône blend—the color and intensity of aromas speak volumes. Purple and opaque, the wine offers fresh, lively scents of clove, allspice, sage, smoked ham, pepper, and lavender, with wild berry fruit, reminiscent of wines France's Northern Rhône Valley. The wine is concentrated and tightly focused, offering texture and balance with an enormously long life ahead of it. This is an intense wine, yet manages to maintain good acidity, structure, and liveliness that prevents it from every coming across as weighty.

As many of you know, I am not one prone to hyperbole. On the other hand, I could make the argument that this is one of the most provocative wines I have ever put in the bottle!