

2009 PETER FRANUS RED HILLS LAKE COUNTY RED WINE



Vineyard:	Fore Family Vineyard
Composition:	Syrah Grenache Mourvèdre
Harvest Date:	October 12, 2009
Fermentation:	15 days average, up to 80°
Maceration:	15 days average
Oak aging:	19 months 100% French Oak 35% new
Bottling Date:	August 22, 2011
Production:	187 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!

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. Fortunately, we lucked out on the pre-rain side.

As for our 2009 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.

There are a lot of wines out in the marketplace that resemble one another. We'll call our 2009 Red Hills Red exotic with an extreme personality. It will definitely not get lost in the shuffle!