

2008 PETER FRANUS RED HILLS LAKE COUNTY RED WINE



Vineyards:	Fore Family Vineyard
Composition:	84% Syrah, 10% Grenache, 4% Mourvèdre
Harvest Date:	October 2 & 24
Fermentation:	10 days average, up to 80°
Oak aging:	20 months 100% French Oak 35% new
Bottling Date:	August 17, 2010
Production:	127 cases

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!

Summers in northern California grape-growing areas are typically uneventful and predictable. 2008 provided a wake-up call. Spring frost struck numerous areas diminishing crop levels significantly. Extreme heat in May followed by cool rainy weather affected bloom and berry set as well. Forest fires in June eerily blackened the summer skies. Heat returned--100°+--in late August, and impacted many Napa Valley vineyards, but the elevation of Red Hills seemed to offer some protection from the extremes others were experiencing.

On to the wine! Virtually opaque and still purple in color, the nose announces northern Rhône, offering the classic characteristics we expect from this vineyard—coffee, clove, black pepper, smoked ham, vanilla, and caramel. Initially more brooding than the 2007 and 2009, the wine has blossomed into a complex array of aromas and flavors. Supported by great structure and acidity, it will continue to develop for many years.

Red Hills Lake County is a special place—this wine is evidence!