

2011 PETER FRANUS CARNEROS SAUVIGNON BLANC



Vineyard:	Stewart Vineyard, Carneros
Composition:	100% Sauvignon Blanc Musque Clone
Harvest Date:	September 11, 2011
Fermentation:	30 days at 49°, VIN 13 Yeast
Aging:	80% Stainless steel 20% Neutral puncheons
Bottling Date:	March 19, 2012
Production:	703 cases x 750ml

Anyone who has tasted with me over the years knows my enthusiasm for the Sauvignon from this vineyard. Its stylish and exotic character distinguish it from its French, New Zealand, and even its California counterparts with an identity all its own, seeming to capture elements from numerous regions. The wind, temperature, restrictive soils, clone, and cultural practices of growers Jim Fore and Doug Hill result in a raw product that I can't wait to get my hands on each year.

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. When you see the black and white "Oreo" cows munching grass on the hillside, look to the right and you will see the vineyard that began providing me with grapes in 1999. The "buzz" about our Sauvignon Blanc has steadily grown, and last year's vintage was the fastest selling ever. Time to check out why!

2011 was a complicated vintage. A cool wet spring diminished crop levels in many vineyards and late ripening vineyards were problematic. On the other hand, cool conditions allowed wonderful flavor development with ripeness achieved at lower sugar levels. If you were one of the fortunate ones, you had the opportunity to produce some wonderful wines.

Our winemaking strategy has remained consistent now for quite a few years now. 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 accentuate aromatics, freshness, and fruitiness. Consistent with our practice in 2010, rather than age the entire lot sur-lie in old puncheons as in previous vintages, only 20% received that treatment. Given the success of the 2010, I think that little enhancement has served the wine well.

Sauvignon Blanc can be very stylish and often evoke a love/hate reaction. I call ours a "friendlier" version. The tropical and mineral elements keep the herbal notes in check, and the mouth offers appropriate richness to support the lively acidity always present in cool-climate grapes. Delicious has typically been the comment that puts a smile on my face, but balance is inching up as the challenger.

Pale straw in color, the exotic nose of our 2011 offers passion fruit, gooseberry, ginger, citrus, and pear notes. Flavors are pure and vibrant, with appropriate acidity and minerality adding an edginess and structure to the mouth. The wine is delightfully refreshing and perhaps the most Loire-like of the last few vintages.

Call it provocative and complex, words not generally reserved for Sauvignon Blanc!