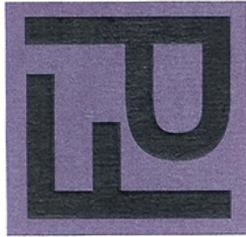


2006 PETER FRANUS NAPA VALLEY MERLOT



PETER FRANUS
NAPA VALLEY MERLOT
2006

Vineyard:	Stewart Vineyard Rancho Chimiles
Composition:	91% Merlot 9% Cab Franc
Harvest Date:	Sept 25, Oct 13
Fermentation:	10 days average, up to 84°
Oak aging:	18 months French 60% new
Bottling Date:	May 9, 2008
Production:	540 cases

Poor downtrodden Merlot! It's hard to believe that some of the most highly regarded and sought after wines in the world come from Pomerol and St. Emilion, the land of Merlot. It fascinates me that the grape has taken a bad rap since it often translates into the very things that people love about red wine—fruitiness, juiciness, and suppleness.

As you know, Stewart has provided me with outstanding Sauvignon Blanc since 1999. A client for whom I consult has been producing a very successful Right Bank blend containing a good percentage of Stewart Merlot. I knew how good the fruit could be, so given the opportunity to work with some beginning in 2006, I said yes. This unique site in Carneros suppresses vigor so berries are typically small and shoot growth modest, producing wines with excellent concentration and wonderfully ripe flavors. Terry Wilson's Rancho Chimiles needs no introduction—it is the source of my outstanding Cabernet Sauvignon fruit.

2006 was a long, cool, growing season that started relatively late for us and extended well into October. The wines in general display good acidity and firmer tannins than 2005, but given Merlot's intrinsically softer tannins, the wine still remains broad and mouth-filling.

Medium ruby in color, the wine offers an inviting nose with lots of spice, sweet toasty oak, black cherry, and ripe plum, made more intriguing by the exotic floral notes of Cabernet Franc. The aromas bounce around with each other, indicating to me complexity since no single component dominates. The round flavors reflect the nose, with an initial sense of sweetness curiously followed by an impression of dryness. The wine remains bright and lively with a refreshing finish. The color, weight, concentration, and flavor profile of this Merlot easily surpass those of many of its Cabernet Sauvignon counterparts.

People often ask me which of my wines is my favorite or what I drink the most. There's a good chance that I'll be entering into my Merlot stage because of its high "D" factor—delicious.