



2017 Napa Valley Cabernet Franc, Matthiasson Vineyard

Cabernet Franc is particularly representative of the site where it is grown, and at its best it is delicate, intriguing, and difficult to understand. Beguiling. Since we are in the sunny Napa Valley and we know that the wine will have beautiful fruit flavors, we focus completely on the mineral and herbal aspects of its character and end up with a wine that somehow manages to be both delicate and powerful, aromatic, long, and with an ethereal lightness. It's a completely different expression of Cabernet Franc than one usually finds in the new world, informed by the wines of Chinon, but something totally unique in and of itself — a true representation of the terroir of our Napa vineyard, and showing a restrained side of Napa that is rarely seen any more.

The wine is 100 percent Cabernet franc from our home vineyard. 2017 was a mild year with a tremendous heat spike in August that reduced the sugar accumulation in the fruit. The result was lighter-bodied aromatic wines, which worked well for our Cabernet Franc.

Because of the soft tannins present in the fruit we included 50% whole clusters in the fermentation. We fermented in small open top bins, with two punch downs per day. We pressed just after dryness, and aged the wine in neutral barrels for 10 months.

The pH is 4.0, the TA is 6.25 g/L, and the alcohol is 12%. 92 cases produced.

The Cabernet Franc has distinct aromas of dry leaves in the fall, poblano chili peppers, and sage, with plummy fruit. The tannins are very soft in the mouth, with an iron-like minerality on the finish. It's light on the palate but firm at the same time — it's a wine with many contradictions that is hard to describe with tasting notes. Easy drinking, but incredibly complex. Great with food.

The Vineyard

The Cabernet Franc represents 5 rows in our home ("Matthiasson") vineyard in the Western Oak Knoll area of Napa Valley where it was grafted onto 15 year old Merlot vines. The clonal selection was brought from France in the late '90s by someone who will remain unnamed — he refers to it as "clone X". Managed using organic methods and dry-farmed, with fruit trees at the ends of the rows, the vines are serenaded throughout the season by kids, coyotes, owls, bees, and the occasional roar of one of our old tractors.