

BUTTONWOOD

A tiny bottling of our more delicate Bordeaux red at Buttonwood Farm Vineyard. Almost a “survival of the fittest” after three frosts in the Franc block during 2008, this vintage is an almost feminine version of our star of the annual FrancFest celebration of this enchanting grape.

In the Vineyard

Intersected by a riparian corridor canyon, our 3.41 acres of Cabernet Franc grace the southeastern corner of the vineyard. Always the first varietal and block in the vineyard to come out of dormancy each springtime, this thin-skinned and finicky varietal is also one of the last to be harvested. As with all of our vines, the Cabernet Franc is on its “own roots”, which means that it is not Cabernet Franc grafted onto phylloxera-tolerant rootstock, but rather Cabernet Franc from the tip of the tallest shoot to the end of the deeply embedded roots. While we may have no scientific evidence to back our claim, we really think this type of planting results in an honest interpretation of the vineyard and the varietal in the resulting wine. Franc demands a lot of attention in the vineyard during its long growing season. The canopy must be perfectly balanced for shade and sun, clusters must be evenly spaced and the vine must carry just the right amount of crop in order to fully ripen. And of course, it is the deer that live in our riparian corridor’s favorite varietal. No wonder, because even with all the challenges we face, it is one of ours too!

The Vintage

2008 – what can we say? It was one challenge from Mother Nature after another. Late spring frosts blackened the new young shoots in not only our Cabernet Franc block, but in many areas of our vineyard, the county, the state and the entire west coast. It was an unprecedented cold spell, not seen in the past 25 years of grape growing. The damaged vines grew new shoots, but were severely behind a normal schedule and crop yields were horribly compromised. And then in mid-October – two more frosts. All of this resulted in a very small crop - our final yield was only 40% of normal years. We picked the Cab Franc in three separate “lots” –one that had not been hit with frost, one that had been hit once and “the survivor” section that had experienced three frosts. Our total yield was 5.4 tons, or a paltry 1.6 tons to the acre. But, as “they say”, great things sometimes come in small packages.

Winemaking

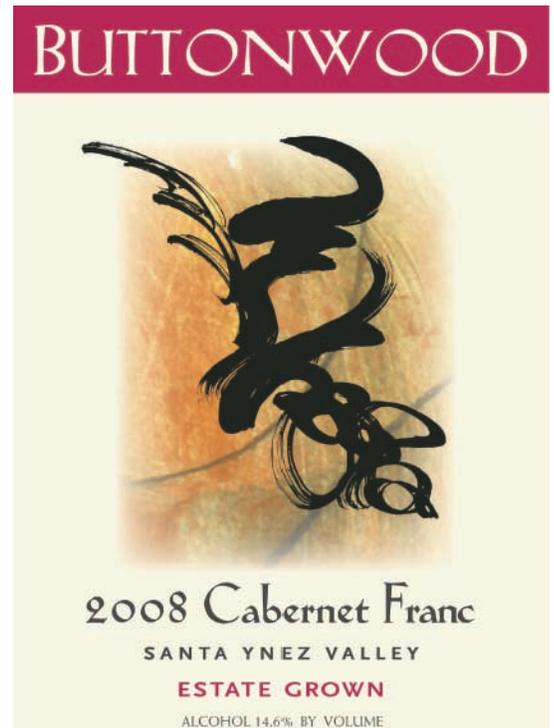
We picked the Cab Franc block as noted in three different lots, harvested by hand and field sorted on 10/29/2008. Because of the small quantities of each lot, the clusters were de-stemmed into 1.5 ton fermenters (4'x4'x4' wooden boxes with liners), and then each inoculated with GRE yeast the next day. Primary fermentation occurred over a 14-day period, and the free run wine from each lot was then directly drained to a combination of French oak barrels and puncheons, about 25% of which were new Belair barrels. The skins were all placed together into the press and a light press cycle then removed the remaining wine, which was drained into neutral French oak barrels. Each barrel was then inoculated with *viniflora oenos* malolactic bacteria, and that fermentation occurred in barrel over the month of December. The wines were racked once during their 18 month aging process, and it was determined that this vintage should be bottled earlier than usual. The combination of barrels for the final blend was determined and the wine lightly filtered in June of 2010. Bottled the following month, 345 cases were produced.

Tasting Notes

This is definitely a vintage-specific Cabernet Franc, with a much more delicate profile than usual. However, the deep and dark crimson color typical of our vineyard continues to impress with a deeply colored body and slightly lighter edges gracing the glass. The 2008 Franc is highly aromatic with a perfumed nose of blueberry, sweet tobacco leaf and herbs that remind of bouquet garni. Medium-bodied with much softer, fine grained tannins than previous vintages, the palate is rewarded with enticing flavors of mulberry, currant, raspberry compote and a hint of star anise on the finish.

Pairing ideas

Lamb shank with spiced cous cous, pheasant or grilled quail, smoky grilled vegetables.



Grown, Produced and Bottled by Buttonwood Farm Winery
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