

FROG'S LEAP

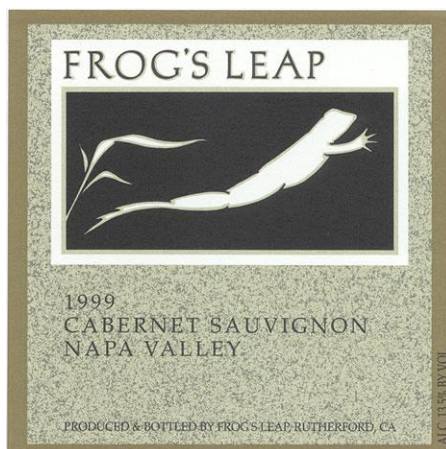
Napa Valley

When John Williams and his partners founded Frog's Leap – on the site of an old frog farm – in 1981, 80% of today's Napa Valley wineries didn't exist. A lot has changed, it seems, and Frog's Leap has grown by ... excuse us, it's hard to avoid a pun. A lot has stayed the same, too.

John Williams' commitment to organic, sustainable, dry-farming has been a Frog's Leap constant. And even at production levels fourfold what they were a decade ago, today's Frog's Leap is as committed as ever to handcrafted quality and to showcasing the inimitable fruits of Rutherford's elite terroir. With control of 294 acres, Frog's Leap today farms 9% of the Rutherford A.V.A. (which is just slightly larger than the appellation Margaux.)

It all began with Sauvignon, and Frog's Leap has maintained its commitment to that too often misunderstood varietal as well. Two thirds of the fruit for today's Frog Leap Sauvignons proudly hails from Rutherford, even though if one looks around the rest of Napa Valley, or for that matter North Coast California as a whole, one might get the idea that Sauvignon is headed for extinction! Not that Chardonnay has been forgotten: excellent contracts in Carneros and some precious fruit from Okaville keep America's most popular white grape on the Frog's Leap roster. Zinfandel was the second wine Frog's Leap released, and has retained its importance in the Frog's Leap line up. Styles of Zin come and go, and at the moment, the elegant, restrained and above all easy-to-drink approach that Frog's Leap has always taken is not what quickens the pace of critics' pulses. So much the worse for the critics.

Frog's Leap's home being Rutherford, it is inevitable that Cabernet, with support from Merlot and Cabernet Franc has taken a leading role here. Since 1996, there has been a



prestige bottling called simply "Frog's Leap Rutherford", around a thousand cases exemplifying the local terroir but never losing sight of the first duty of any wine – or certainly any Frog's Leap wine: to provide a delightful accompaniment to good food.

"We are looking for ripeness, but not hyper-ripeness," says Williams summing up his stylistic goals. "Over-extraction and too much alcohol are fashionable, but they are they spell the death of terroir."

While Frog's Leaps wines are characterized by a golden mean of balance, their puns, jokes, and general merrymaking have threatened to leap overboard ever since the debut of this unusual label. "Liebfrögmilch", blended from Napa Valley Chenin Blanc and Riesling that somehow jumped clear of the dozer, is just their latest witty and delicious diversion from the serious work of fly-catching.

Varieties: *Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Riesling (these two last-named for "Liebfrögmilch"), Zinfandel, Merlot, Cabernet.*

Acres: 35 acres at Frog's Leap Vineyards (a.k.a. "The Red Barn"); More than 50 acres are owned elsewhere in Rutherford and other vineyards are under long-term contracts.

Average production: ca. 50,000 cs.

Sauvignon Blanc Napa Valley

Chardonnay Napa Valley

"Liebfrögmilch"

Zinfandel Napa Valley

Merlot Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa V.

"Rutherford"

Note: Availability of many Frog's Leap wines is subject to the season.

Year after year, Frog's Leap has figured prominently in *Wine & Spirits'* restaurant poll as among the most requested labels in the country, with special recognition in the categories of Sauvignon Blanc and Merlot.