



FRATELLI PERATA WINERY 2002 CABERNET FRANC, ESTATE

We often use the phrase "Bordeaux varietals" in our tasting room. Bordeaux, France has made, and has been made, famous by the red grape varieties Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Merlot, and Petit Verdot.

The modern era of Paso Robles grape growing promoted planting of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Both do extremely well here, particularly when carefully cultivated toward premium wine production, not simply huge grape tonnage. Fratelli Perata began in 1997 blending Cabernet Franc with Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. It is found in the Merlot, Winemaker's Selection and in our Tre Sorelle.

The Cabernet Franc in these blends was used to add another layer of complexity. From the Cabernet Sauvignon are deep cherry, currant flavors with tannins for aging. From the Merlot are also cherry, mocha, and softer tannins, with the acidity for aging.

Now the Cabernet Franc adds softer tannins, lighter sense of acidity, deep color and the sense of terroir. There is an earthy smokiness that wraps around the cherry flavors. We have an earlier maturing variety with great color and flavors. Still the tonnage per acre is low, so the intensity we are known for shows well here.

As the vines mature, so do the flavors. The 2002 Cabernet Franc continues to be a showy varietal, bottled as a 100% varietal. The relatively young vines of a new French clone are proving a good match for the Paso Robles appellation.

The grapes were harvested earlier than previous years, on September 25, 2002 at a Brix of 24.0 degrees, pH of 3.5, not quite as sweet as the 2001, with similar acidity. The grape clusters were sorted at the crusher for good color and perfect ripeness. It was fermented in 1½-ton lots, with the cap punched down by hand 4 times per day for 12 days. It was pressed to only 1 bar of pressure in our stainless steel press, and then pumped directly into new French oak barrels. Racked 4 times during barrel aging, the wine was bottled unfiltered and unfiltered on February 14, 2004. This is a very limited production.