

## Wine of the week: Frank Family Vineyards, 2007 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

### Wine of the Week

By Peg Melnik

The most challenging part of making a great cabernet sauvignon is getting balance and concentration in the same sip. That's according to Todd Graff, the winemaker behind our wine of the week winner - the Frank Family Vineyards, 2007 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon at \$45.

Graff said that while there are many varietals and many great locations, he keeps his wine front and center for consumers because in Napa, cab is king. So just what happens behind the scenes to make Graff's cab regal?

"We own the majority of the vineyards, and the balance we have long-term contracts with growers who do an excellent job," Graff said. "Then we have a cellar staff that loves making wine."

Graff includes himself among the passionate. He has worked at the winery for eight seasons and his resume includes some heavy hitters in Napa Valley -- Joseph Phelps, Stag's Leap, Schramsberg and Cordoniu Napa (now Artesa). He's also worked abroad in Australia, France and Portugal.

Drawn to winemaking at a young age, Graff signed up for an introductory wine course while attending Santa Rosa Jr. College and never looked back. He graduated from UC Davis with a degree in plant science and viticulture in 1984.

As a winemaker, Graff has to contend with Mother Nature and her occasional crushing blows. "Every vintage is a new season and we are able to draw off our experience and instincts to create the best wine the season produces," he said.

### A bold and Sassy Cab

By Michele Anna Jordan

Our Wine of the Week, Frank Family Vineyards 2007 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$45), is big, bold and sassy, with an exuberant juiciness and a pantryful of spice. It is a classic example of the type of cabernet that appeals to fans of the style of wine currently popular in the United States, which is to say wines with lots of forward fruit, a velvety plushness to the tannins and plenty of alcohol, 14.5 percent.

Swirling within the flavors of ripe Bing cherries, pureed raspberries, warm blackberries and black plums are suggestions of spice, especially star anise, allspice, cardamom and clove, and herbs like sage and the slightest hint of tarragon. Underneath these most obvious flavors are subtle notes of roasted coffee, dried cedar, milk chocolate, black and white pepper and maybe, just maybe, a bit of cinnamon.

That a wine like this one goes beautifully with steak is a no-brainer. Ribeye, grilled rare and served with some sort of luxurious potato dish and wilted spinach, is one of the best matches I can imagine. Why? Because the rich fat juiciness of the meat and the voluptuousness of the potatoes engage the wine's fruit and spice while cushioning the palate, mitigating the heat of the alcohol and the youthfully firm tannins.

Other good matches include beef and winter squash stew, classic Coq au Vin with roasted potatoes, pastas with cream sauces, butter-roasted root vegetables finished with creme fraiche, stewed eggplant with roasted garlic, rare venison, braised wild boar and pizza with caramelized onions and

