

Frenchtown Farms ‘Cotillion’ 2019

Producer: Aaron and Cara Mockrish

Provenance: Sierra Foothills, California

Farming: Organic, dry-farmed

Grape(s): 50/ 50 Syrah and early picked Grenache

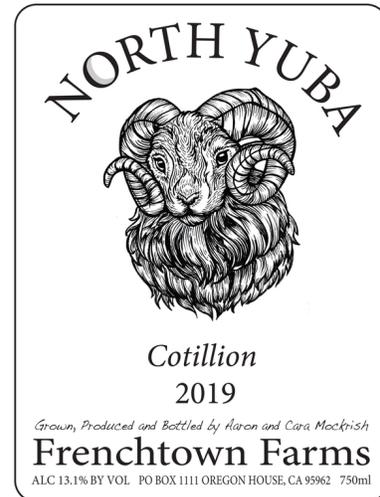
Vineyard(s): High elevation red, granitic terraced vineyards at Renaissance.

Fermentation/ Aging: gently destemmed and cofermented as whole berries for 9-10 days before press to tank to finish fermentation. Aged for 12 months in barrel.

Fining/ Filtration: none.

Sulfite: 22 ppm at bottling

Misc: ‘Cotillion’ is apparently some odd East Coast high society tradition of formal dances. More importantly, this wine functions as their experimental wine so each vintage will be a new exploration.



The Producer:

In 2015, East coasters Aaron and Cara Mockrish moved to North Yuba, California with a mind to start a farm raising sheep and growing vegetables. That all changed when they encountered a bottle of 2008 Clos Saron ‘Black Pearl.’ The wine captivated them and upon discovering that Clos Saron was just up the road they set out to make a connection. This evolved into an apprenticeship of sorts that formed the foundation for what is now Frenchtown. Although Frenchtown began as an ideological successor to the Clos Saron legacy, Cara and Aaron have been through a rigorous process of exploration to find their own voice. Eye opening conversations with luminaries like Batiste Overnoy, Pascaline Lepeltier and Nicolas Gordo of Domaine Simon Bize have helped them develop new ideas about how to temper and communicate North Yuba’s monumental terroir to produce more youthful wines.

The Vineyard

Through a farmer’s market, Aaron and Cara encountered a few of the members of the ‘Fellowship of Friends,’ a doomsday cult that wine professionals will know under the name ‘Renaissance.’ The sprawling 360+ acres of terraced vineyards were hewn from sun baked, red granite that accentuates the already potent California sun.

Though the famed winery has shuttered, about 30 acres of vineyards remain of which Cara and Aaron cultivate about 20, selected with the counsel of their mentor Gideon Beinstock of Clos Saron. From their blocks they grow Sauvignon Blanc, Roussanne, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and a small block of Grenache. Although the vineyards were irrigated before they took over, Cara and Aaron stopped irrigating. Instead they rely on the deep root systems the old vines have developed to find water and increase complexity.

Like their mentor, Cara and Aaron follow a ‘touch’ intensive approach to harvesting that results in quite a few more passes through any particular vineyard. Where they differ is the standard they use: instead of the ‘avocado rule’ to achieve perfect ripeness, they aim for ‘perfectly under ripe strawberries.’

The Cellar

The two varieties are picked simultaneously and destemmed using a hand destemmer Aaron built out of 2x6’s with holes drilled into them. The result are bins full of almost entirely unbroken grapes with almost no juice at the bottom at the beginning. Every morning and evening during the duration of the fermentation they perform gentle punch downs by foot while suspending themselves above to make sure the punchdowns are gentle as possible. Although the 9-10 day maceration is double their typical approach to reds Aaron describes it as ‘more of an infusion.’ The wine is pressed through a perforated bladder press into tank to finish fermentation and then barreled down for 12 months aging. All wine at Frenchtown Farms is transferred by gravity or by a nitrogen wand that impels the wine more gently than even a peristaltic pump.

For more details email info@OlmsteadWine.com

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