

Frenchtown Farms 'Suba Rosa' 2018

Producer - Aaron and Cara Mockrish

Provenance: Sierra Foothills, California

Farming: Organic, dry-farmed

Grape(s): Syrah with a tiny amount of Roussanne

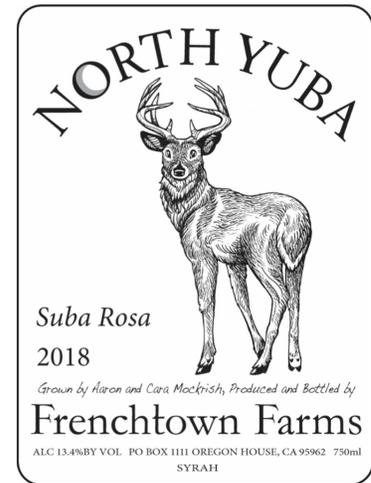
Vineyard(s): Terraced vineyards at Renaissance with red, granitic soils. Syrah comes from the most wild and underdeveloped block at Renaissance at a 2300 foot elevation. The Roussanne comes block 23 at Renaissance with the same kind of red hued granitic terroir.

Vintage: the principle difference between '18 'Suba Rosa' and previous vintages of 'Nineteen Harts' is the greatly lessened portion of Roussanne due to deer breaking through the fencing and eating most of the green shoots.

Fermentation/ Aging: Whole cluster, foot crushed and fermented in Flextank harvest bins for 5 days. Pressed back into Flextank until dry and then aged without stirring in puncheons for 6-7 months, raked once before bottling. Bottle aged for another 6 months before release.

Fining/ Filtration: none.

Misc: 'Suba Rosa' is a renaming of 'Nineteen Harts' taking the more esoteric, occult connotation of the phrase sub rosa and changing the first word to rhyme with Yuba.



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 Farm. 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. 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 over 40 years to find water and increase complexity.

The fruit for ‘Suba Rosa’ comes from the most wild and underdeveloped block of Syrah at Renaissance at a 2300 foot elevation. The Roussanne comes block 23 at Renaissance with the same kind of red hued granitic terroir. In 2018, they weren’t fast enough at repairing damage to the deer fencing and the deer ate most of the green shoots in spring, resulting in a microscopic harvest of Roussanne.

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

Whole clusters of Syrah and a small amount of Roussanne are crushed by foot and co-fermented in polyethylene harvest bins on the stems and skins for 5 days before pressing back into tank until the wine is dry. The wine is then aged for 22 months in old puncheons on gross lees with a single racking right before bottling and then aged an additional 6 months before release.

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