

## The Magic of Frank Family Wines



What do you get when you mix in the drive and passion of a former Walt Disney movie industry executive and a phenomenal vineyard in Napa Valley? You get magical wines from Frank Family Vineyards.

Mr. Frank has had an illustrious career in Hollywood, where he was Chairman of Walt Disney Television and Telecommunications and headed Disney's syndication arm, Buena Vista. He was then President of Walt Disney Studios for nearly a decade and oversaw the development of The Disney Channel. And even though Rich Frank is well versed in fairy dust and hard work, his wines are definitely not Mickey Mouse. On the contrary, they are full-blown "E-Ticket rides" (those of a certain age, ahem, will understand the reference...).

It all started, as do all the great stories, once upon a time in the 1980's, in a magical land far, far away. That's when our handsome prince began taking weekend trips to the kingdom of Napa Valley. While touring the kingdom, Rich fell in love with not just the wine, but with the land where the grapes grew and the people who made the juice. So much so, that he bought a house in 1990 and started looking for vineyard land.

The show really got started in 1992, when Mr. Frank and close friend, Koerner Rombauer, purchased the Kornell Champagne Cellars on the site of the historic Larkmead Winery in Calistoga and eventually renamed the project Frank Family Vineyards. In 1996, the dynamic duo bought Napa Cellars in Oakville, CA.

Todd Graff, a 1984 graduate of UC Davis with a degree in Plant Science and Viticulture, joined Frank Family Vineyards in 2003 as their winemaker. Todd came with over twenty years of experience in the wine industry, having spent time working in Europe, Australia, and California, and a passion for sparkling wine.

I recently had the opportunity to share a few glasses of wine with Rich and Todd during a dinner at Frank Family Vineyards, and I must say, it was definitely a magical evening.

I thought Todd was kidding me when he said the **2013 Frank Family Napa Valley Chardonnay** featured "aromas of fresh tropical fruit, marzipan and honeysuckle" but that is, indeed, all in there, and more. It has a beautiful mouthfeel and delivers layers of flavors, including baked apples, Myer lemon and roasted nuts on the front of the palate and ends with a long elegant finish where notes of vanilla and slatey minerals add a nice level of sophistication and balance. A stellar choice with roasted halibut. **\$35**

Made with fruit from the famous Sangiacomo Family Vineyard in Sonoma, the **2013 Frank Family Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir** has a bright ruby core that opens with aromas of black cherries, sassafras, raspberry, dried fruits, mushrooms and spice. The palate is full-bodied, generously loaded with fresh blueberry compote flavors and lush savory notes that lead to roasted figs. The tannins are refined and provide elegance and structure. Perfect with grilled salmon. **\$35**

Aged 23 months in one-third new French oak barrels, The **2012 Frank Family Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon** exhibits an amazing bouquet of creamy cassis and aromas of violets and lilacs. Ripe blackberries dominate the front end of the palate and melt into a long, focused finish that concentrate flavors of anise, chocolate and toffee. While the tannins appear to be on the softer side – and can easily be consumed today, this wine has plenty of structure and will age well for several years. But if you must try it now, try it with a veal chop. **\$50**

The **2013 Frank Family Reserve Zinfandel Chiles Valley** has a splash of Petite Sirah added in for richness and depth. This is a wine that really grabs your attention with a nose featuring scents of black cherries, dark plums and black raspberries. In the mouth, the wine fills out nicely with additional black fruits and spices, then finishes smoothly with notes of pepper and plum. Barrel aged in 50% new French oak barrels, this is a comforting wine that would be perfect with comfort food, like lasagna. **\$55**