

Lang & Reed Wine Company: Exemplifying the virtues of Cabernet Franc

October 23, 2015

9:24 AM MST



The Wines of Lang & Reed Wine Company
Cori Solomon

Our lives take different paths and as we maneuver down each road we traverse, it establishes how we come to know the people we encounter along the way. Such is the case with John and Tracey Skupny, owners of **Lang & Reed Wine Company** in St. Helena, California, whose friendship came about through a common interest, our Salukis, one of the oldest recognized breed of dog. Having known John and Tracey for years prior to the formation of the winery, meeting at dog shows while showing our Salukis and having a common lineage in our dog's pedigree, it has come time to showcase the marvelous wines with emphasis on **Cabernet Franc** that the Skupnys create.

At the time we met, John was general manager at Niebaum-Coppola. Having been privy to the beginning years of Lang & Reed, it is easy to say that the Skupny's style of winemaking has grown and developed into the production of very complex wines that make their own statement along with exemplifying what the Cabernet Franc as an individual varietal expresses.

John and Tracey's current venture began in 1996 when they decided to explore one of their favorite

varieties, Cabernet Franc as a stand-alone [wine](#). Cabernet Franc in California was typically used as a blend for Bordeaux wines. Their love of the Loire Valley in France also prompted them to proceed down this path.

John, after working at such notable wineries as Caymus Vineyards and Clos du Val, and Tracey as marketing Director at Spottswoode Winery, decided to take that leap to create their own winery, which is named after their sons Reed and Jerzy Lang. Their first label and now the North Coast Cabernet Franc label features an image of a Saluki.

You might call John the father of California Cabernet Franc because his gamble with this varietal has shown and encouraged others to follow in his footsteps. Cabernet Franc is the backbone and parent of Cabernet Sauvignon. Along with Sauvignon Blanc the two varieties meshed together to form what is now one of the most popular varietals. Without Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon would not exist.

Currently the Skupnys make two Cabernet Francs, Lang & Reed – North Coast and the Lang & Reed – Napa Valley – Two-Fourteen. New to the line up is their venture into white wine with the Lang & Reed [Chenin Blanc](#).

Our tasting began with the 2013 Chenin Blanc – Mendocino. The grapes come from Talmage Bench where most of the vines are 35 years old. The wine is aged in both stainless steel and French Oak. Twenty years after making their first Cabernet Franc the Skupnys celebrated with the release of their first Chenin Blanc, another wine that gained notoriety in the Loire Valley. This wine is a collaboration between father and son. The wine is fragrant with aromas of honeysuckle. It is elegantly light and easy drinking with its flavors of citrus and tropical fruit.

The Lang & Reed Cabernet Franc – North Coast was the first wine the Skupnys created in 1993. This was the wine that was the deciding factor on establishing Lang & Reed three years later. Tasting it in the late 90s it was much lighter in texture than it is now. Tasting the 2012 one finds aromas of violet and licorice with flavors of wild berries and an earthy undertone. The wine is bright with a silky and velvety quality. The wine is made up of grapes from Lake County, Sonoma County, Suisun Valley and Napa Valley. It is aged for 8 months in 2 – 4 year old neutral French oak.

Finally the 2012 Lang & Reed Two-Fourteen is a Cabernet Franc that highlights the virtues of the 214 clone. This clone is representative of some of the most famous Cabernet Franc vineyards in the Loire Valley. When the Skupnys discovered that Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyards in Napa Valley had the ideal terroir for growing this variety it was only natural for them to create a clone specific Cabernet Franc. The wine in its sixth vintage has aromas of violets and licorice with flavors of chocolate, mocha and cherries. It exemplifies the elegance and balance that Lang & Reed has been able to obtain in their quest for showing us the virtues of the Cabernet Franc grape.

In summing up the wines of John and Tracey Skupny, they are frankly excellent. Lang & Reed's slogan sums it up aptly both in describing the wine as well as the personality of both John and Tracey, "Can

we be perfectly franc?” and they certainly are with their Cabernet Franc.

For more information:

Lang & Reed Wine Company



Cori Solomon

Brentwood Glen Wine Examiner