

Cabernet Franc For Fine Wine

Adam McTaggart

Winemaker

Boxwood Winery, Middleburg VA

Boxwood Vineyard

- Middleburg, VA
- Granite Soils
- Rolling Topography, ~530ft Above Sea Level
- Soils Structure Varies; Thinner in high areas, heavier and deeper in low area
- Well balanced soils
- Cab Franc, Merlot, Cab Sauv, Petit Verdot and Malbec

Boxwood Winery



Boxwood Cabernet Franc

- 5.6 Acres, 1m x 2m Vine Spacing (6'8"x3'4")
- 1.1 Acres CF 214/3309, 2004 Planting
- 2.4 Acres CF 214/101-14, '04-'05 Planting
- 1 Acre CF 623/RG, 2006 Planting
- 1.1 Acre CF 327/RG, 2006 Planting
- 2.4 Acres more planned for 2012 split between 623/RG & 327/RG

CF 214/3309

- Combination proves very reliable on the site
- Middle of Vineyard
- Better set than 214/101-14 in wet years, otherwise growth characteristics are similar
- Small, tight clusters
- Small berries
- Small wings

CF 214/101-14

- Most vigorous of all CF in vineyard, still very manageable with hedging
- Laterals very fruitful, could impact quality
- Cane diameter very consistent
- Clusters per shoot very consistent (2.2)
- Clusters seem to hang lower on shoot than either 623 or 327

Cab Franc 214/3309



CF 214 - Wine

- Year in, year out very consistent
- Dark Fruit and Anise Predominate the nose
- Pure Strawberry on Palate, very fruity
- Very good tannin structure, long finish
- Fatter mid-palate

CF 327/RG

- Good Set
- Generally low vigor
- Very few laterals with clusters
- Clusters hang higher on cane than 214 (Avg 2 nodes)
- Less clusters per shoot (1.7), cluster size and berry size bigger than 214
- Medium size wings, sometimes 2 wings

Young Cab Franc 327/RG



Cab Franc 327 Cluster



CF 327 Wine

- Floral and Anise on Nose
- Spiciness on palate with very long finish of pure strawberry
- Round on palate, generally soft tannins when young
- Thinner mid-palate

CF 623/RG

- Highest section of vineyard, first area to show water stress in dry years
- Good Set
- Very few laterals with clusters
- Least clusters per shoot (1.4)
- Clusters hang highest on shoot (2.7 nodes)
- Biggest clusters and berries of CF Clones
- Usually one big wing

Cab Franc 623 Cluster



CF 623 Wine

- Floral nose
- Salty/Briney and soft on palate
- Thin middle
- Shorter finish

Quality Happens in the Vineyard

Site Selection (New Vineyard)

- High elevation and/or sloping terrain
- Rocky and/or loose soils
- Open areas/breezeways
- Low rainfall site if possible
- Hire a Consultant
- Tour neighboring vineyards, speak with neighbors, ask questions

Site Selection (Expansion of Existing Vineyard)

- Learn from your own successes/failures
- Learn from neighbors
- Make the best of what you have, change aspects of the site if needed
- Hire a Consultant

Quality Happens in the Vineyard

Selection of Plant Material

- PLANT MATERIAL IS IMPORTANT
- Only buy from a good nursery
- A-Clones, ENTAV
- Select a rootstock suited to site
- Test Vineyard
- Mix of Clones/Rootstocks
- Custom Order the vines and be patient

Planting

- Prepare the site
- Inspect the vines
- Plant in a timely manner

Management of Established Vineyard: Site Specific, Philosophy, Budget

- Cane Pruning
- Vertical Shoot Positioning
- Cluster Zone Leaf Removal
- Cluster Thinning/Dewinging
- Hilling/Dehilling
- Cover Crops
- Mechanization vs. “Gentle Techniques”

Pros/Cons of Cab Franc from a Quality Standpoint

Pros

- Ability to ripen consistently
- Can be grown in many different areas/soil types
- Works well independently and in blends
- Fairly disease resistant

Cons

- Can be vigorous
- Downy Mildew
- Phomopsis
- Can be inconsistent during Veraison (very disconcerting)

Winemaking with Cab Franc

- Benefits from Gentle Handling
- Hand Harvesting
- Cluster Selection/Sorting
- Destemming
- Use of Gravity in the Winery
- Saignee (Bleeding the Fermenter)
- Small batch fermentations
- Punch Down Method
- Mix of new used oak, mix of coopers