

Wine & Spirits

“The Other Cabernet”

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The varietal cabernet franc trend gained momentum with bottlings by small producers such as La Jota, Niebaum-Coppola and Havens in the early '90s. It picked up speed through the mid-'90s, and doesn't appear to be slowing down. Franc bottlings continue to surprise and delight those of us who tend to think we know what to expect from Napa Valley wine. At last year's spring tasting in Carneros, where chardonnay and pinot noir naturally predominated, Truchard's inaugural cabernet franc was one of the day's biggest hits.

That was especially significant as a new wine from one of the valley's long-established growers. Tony and Joanne Truchard planted their first cabernet franc on their Carneros property in 1974. They built their own winery in 1990, but sold all their cabernet franc grapes to other wineries (including Duckhorn, Havens, Cain, Raymond, and Mondavi.) Then came '97. “It was an outstanding year with such a large crop that we had some left at the end,” Joanne Truchard told me. “So we made 143 cases of cabernet franc.”