



2015 RIQUEWIHR

LOST SLOUGH VINEYARD

This wine is composed of 100% GEWURZTRAMINER from the Lost Slough Vineyard in the Sacramento River Delta.

This is a fascinating vineyard and one of the most important that we work with. It has the shocking ability to produce fruit for white wine of absolutely excellent quality year in and year out. We have only declassified wine from this vineyard once in twelve years.

The vineyard itself is a large flat plain in the Delta, a beautiful, calm, cool, wetlands east of Napa and south of Sacramento. Its soil is shallow and consists of clay loam dotted with ancient sea shells from when the whole area was under water— only as little as 150 years ago. The weather is cool, foggy, with very good breezes in the afternoon and evening. The soil is difficult and makes the vines struggle; the cool, breezy growing conditions permit leisurely ripening.

We learned in 2012 that we needed to harvest the fruit for this wine with a focus on acidity rather than on ripe and powerful flavors. That has allowed us to make a wine that is forceful and complex, but with beautiful balance and subtlety— whereas earlier versions of this wine insisted on shouting!

We harvested a little more than a ton of the fruit on August 1— so early because of the drought. We have experienced strong drought conditions now since 2012, and in 2015 the vines reacted by speeding up their physiology by more than a month compared to pre-drought conditions in 2009. This allows us to harvest the fruit much earlier in the summer— with much less exposure to the sun and no dehydrating effect of sun and heat. In turn, this means lower alcohols and higher acidity— in every way, more freshness and lightness.

As always, we foot-stomped the fruit in the press and then pressed it immediately and delicately, to minimize the effect of the skins that we had just somewhat broken. We want some of the aromatic and phenolic power released by the skins, but not too much. For the first time, we kept the fractions coming out the press separate, and fermented each fraction separately in its own barrel, without settling or racking. The increased the salinity and funk of the wine to levels that we had never achieved before— and this felt like a complete triumph!

The juice was fermented in neutral oak and aged for 6 months before bottling. We succeeded in limiting malo-lactic fermentation and filtered the wine before bottling.

A note on the origin of the name:

The vineyard is really not beautiful, no matter how amazing it is. I love the Delta and all of its absolutely flat and watery grandeur. But it is nothing like a medieval town on a hillside in Alsace. We called the wine "Riquewihir" in a rueful and ironic gesture at the beautiful (in another way) town in Alsace that has the most Grand Cru Gewürztraminer vineyards.

TOTAL PRODUCTION:
about 120 cases