

2000 SHOOTING STAR BLUE FRANC

WINEMAKER: Jed Steele

REGION: Transplanted Lemberger grape from Austria

COLOUR: Deep colour, ruby and violets

NOSE: The wine is full of black fruit on the nose with a lightly oaked note.

PALATE: It has a medium body with great color and the flavor and aroma profile that is a cross between Zinfandel and Pinot Noir.

RECOMMENDATION: Given the whimsical label and great flavors, this is a wine for festive occasions especially outdoor events like barbecues and picnics.

In 1975 I had the opportunity to travel to Austria and visit their wine-growing region on the banks of the Danube River. This country produces many great wines but until recently they were mainly for local consumption. One wine that impressed me was a red wine made from the Lemberger grape. This is an odd name and some growers did refer to it with its ancient name: Blau Frankisch or blue grape from France. These wines remained in my memory and when I began to consult for Columbia Crest Winery in the early 1990's I discovered that there was a significant planting of Lemberger in Washington State in the Yakima Valley appellation.

The winemakers in Washington loved the variety but universally hated the name as it brings up bad memories of the strong cheese of the same name. I decided that the wine was worth pursuing and recalling the other name from Austria, chose to call our version Blue Franc.

In a flash of inspiration I selected a French Franc note as our label, getting approval for which was no easy task. Each year we choose to watermark a wine person of note on the label. This year we chose Andy Quady of Quady winery as our featured personage.



Ubrico del Piave (oo bree AH koh)

What would happen if you took a nice cheese, soaked it in red wine, and let it age several months under grape skins? This delicious cow's milk cheese is created by farmers in Piave, a region of Veneto.

Ubrico (Italian for "drunken") gets its name and dark red rind from being doused in the fresh skins and seeds of black grapes after they have been pressed (usually Cabernet, Merlot or Raboso). The very hard rind protects the soft white cheese.

The rind grows very hard, and adopts a dark wine color. The compact, white curd concealed inside has a distinctive flavor, piquant and sweet at the same time, and is very fragrant, with a hint of wine on the palate.

We recommend you drinking red wine with it, better still if it's a Merlot or Cabernet.