



STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS
1998 CASK 23
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Vineyards ~ CASK 23 is a proprietary red wine blend made from grapes grown in S.L.V. and FAY, our two estate vineyards located in the Stags Leap District. Although adjoining, FAY and S.L.V. experience slightly different growing conditions and express distinct fruit expressions. S.L.V., of Paris Tasting fame and whose soils are predominately volcanic in nature, offers complex, multilayered Bordeaux-like fruit elements. Soils in FAY Vineyard are more alluvial in makeup, and this vineyard produces luminous perfumes and lush berry flavors. These two separate 'personalities' are likened to those of *fire* and *water*, in part because the different fruit expressions appear to be derived from the origins of their soils. Our viticultural practices have increasingly turned to microfarming; where in the early years, we broke these vineyards up into blocks according to obvious changes in soil and slope, we now keep very small lots separate according to how the fruit tastes. We now farm vine-to-vine, throughout the growing and ripening season from initial canopy structure, to leaf count and distribution, through cluster formation. While the 1998 vintage has been panned by some wine critics across the board, those who have looked at individual wineries and growers have found the 1998 CASK 23 a worthy successor to the CASK 23 wines preceding it. We make CASK 23 only in select vintages and the particular conditions of the 1998 vintage, the complementary nature of these two vineyards, and our viticultural practices that focus the vine's resources to fully ripening its fruit allowed us to succeed in producing an exceptionally elegant wine.

Vintage ~ The transition year from El Niño to La Niña was marked by heavy rainfall. A spring that never was evolved into a summer that almost never was, bringing us to a harvest that finally was. Cool spring showers set a moderate crop which was to help in flavor development later on. Aside from one heat spike, the summer was cooler than normal. It was a year that tested winemakers' resolve not to panic in the anticipation of autumn rains. Fruit that had achieved sugar ripeness was left on the vine, allowing for the development of full fruit maturity. Two storm systems left us little more than a light misting of moisture, leaving unaffected hardier varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon. Brilliantly clear days of moderate heat followed, turning berry skins uniformly black with concentrated richness. Flavors were extraordinary from our estate vineyards, giving our winemaking team the simple task of balancing 'fire' and 'water'.

Wine ~ *This is not a wine for the faint of heart. Who said 1998 was a weak vintage? Open this wine when you have a very long evening to savor its magnificent journey along a sensual path of great beauty. The fiery and intense elements of S.L.V. are softened by the gentle roundness of FAY. Aromas of cassis, wild strawberry, raspberry and black cherry come alive as if out of the heart of a cedar cigar box just as it is opened. Trailing notes of wet leather, black and white pepper, vanilla and roasted almonds rest gently on a bed of dried violets. A red fruit entry transforms itself into silky plummy. Power and finesse rest on a firm, yet discreet structure of fruit and oak tannins. The sensation lingers, reverberating like the memory of a great piece of music. Serve with a richly sauced loin of venison accompanied by slow cooked butternut squash or wild mushrooms in a cabernet reduction over creamy polenta.*

Harvest Dates ~ September 3–October 23
Harvest Brix ~ 24.6° (average)
Titratable Acid ~ 0.59g/100ml
pH ~ 3.63
Barrel Aging ~ 20 months French oak

Blend ~ 93.5% Cabernet Sauvignon
4.1% Merlot, 2.4% Petite Verdot
Appellation ~ 100% Napa Valley
Release Date ~ September 1, 2001