



REPLANTING THE VINEYARDS, RE-LAUNCHING THE RESERVE

In 1999, after nearly two decades in the wine business, Dennis and Judith Groth started an ambitious, multi-year program of vineyard renewal and winery expansion—replanting vines, upgrading facilities, applying everything the art and science of winegrowing had to offer. The goal: to guarantee another generation of fine wines, and secure a future for generations of Groths. The highly anticipated release of the 2005 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, the first Reserve in five years, exemplifies the progress in reaching that goal.

“Making great wine takes a large investment of patience, experience and dedication, not to mention dollars,” says Dennis. The years’ long collaboration between winemaker Michael Weis and vineyard manager Ben Benson led to the replanting of the 54 Cabernet acres in Oakville. Block by carefully considered block, selected clones, rootstocks, and trellising techniques were put in place, chosen based on years of direct experience and thorough familiarity with recent advances in viticulture. In several blocks, the direction of the vine rows was changed, allowing the wind to blow through more freely, reducing both the threat of mold and the need for chemical solutions. One block that had been first planted to Chardonnay by Judith and Dennis, was replanted to Cabernet Sauvignon. In fact upon coming to Groth in 1994, Michael Weis commented “Why is there Chardonnay planted to the best soils on the property for Cabernet?” Michael noted that this particular block matched the exact conditions of the Reserve vineyard.

“After the replanting,” says Dennis, “we embarked on rebuilding our barrel cellar, as well as our crush and fermentation areas. All this has the same purpose—making the best wine the vintage will allow.” The new crush pad holds two new presses, as well as tables for hand-sorting every cluster of red grapes that arrives. The new fermentation room holds smaller stainless steel tanks (1,800 to 4,800 gallons) that are ideal for small lots of Cabernet from the newly-replanted blocks. A new 8,000 square foot barrel

cellar was put into operation in 2006. The old barrel cellar has been rebuilt, exclusively for the Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon. Another addition is a Reserve Tasting Room devoted to showcasing the Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.

The family and the Groth winemaking team knew that the replanting would translate to a temporary suspension of the Reserve Cabernet program. In the immediate and short term this meant a significant loss of revenue and more importantly the potential loss of loyal champions of the Groth Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon. Everyone knew that the Oakville climate and the rocky, well-drained soils of the estate vineyards would give the new vines every chance to perform well. Combining that confidence, with a commitment to long-term planning, the Groths waited for the right vintage to arrive, and 2005 turned out to be the one.

The Reserve Cabernet program gets every ounce of special care a winery can devote to its flagship wine. The 2005 Reserve is made from the Reserve vineyard which produces the best Cabernet Sauvignon grown on the Oakcross Vineyard. All the grape clusters are sorted to weed out any that are underripe or overripe fruit, then destemmed without crushing; the berries then go through a second sort to make sure only the best goes into the fermenters. The new, smaller fermenters make it possible to handle multiple lots that come in only as the grapes ripen. Aging takes place in a dedicated, gravity-flow, dual-level barrel room set aside only for the Reserve Cabernet.

The new vines, new facilities, and new cellar procedures mean that Groth will continue to make the distinctive wines it has always made, only more so. These wines make a statement with elegance and refinement and capture a special place, Oakville, in the Napa Valley.