



## **THE VINEYARDS OF PEJU PROVINCE**

### **HB Vineyards**

*When Tony Peju purchased the thirty acre “Stephanie Vineyard” in 1983, it had been producing wine grapes since the early 1900s and some of the vines much longer. Originally planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and Colombard, the fruit was sold to a number of wineries by the vineyard’s former owners.*

*Peju continued to sell grapes initially, learning which blocks of vines excelled and tasting the wines made from his fruit. He continually improved the vineyard and increased attention to canopy management, trellising and irrigation. He also changed the name to the “HB Vineyard”, the initials of his wife.*

*Ideally situated between Highway 29 and the west bank of the Napa River, the vineyard is part of the Rutherford Appellation, a 6 square mile region famous even by Napa Valley standards. Nearby are the historic vineyards of Inglenook (now Niebaum-Coppola), Robert Mondavi, Beaulieu and Caymus. The soil at HB Vineyard is deep and well drained, formed by three alluvial fans which supply gravel and sand to the valley floor’s deep loamy soil. The sub strata are augmented by marine sedimentary materials with some volcanic deposits. Water flows easily through the soil and drains to the river.*

*Rutherford is at the valley’s widest point and so has longer sun exposure and therefore a higher radiant value than other parts of Napa Valley. UC Davis categorizes the area as Region II. Despite the warm growing temperatures, the vines are cooled in the evening by the northern reaches of San Francisco (San Pablo) Bay. A typical summer day sees evening temperatures drop by 40-50 degrees. Cool night temperatures allow the fruit to ripen slowly, maturing tannins and balancing acids in the long growing season. Rain in Rutherford comes mainly in the winter months, 26-36 inches annually, filling the aquifers and reservoirs which are necessary in the valley’s irrigated vineyards.*

*It is perfect terroir for wine grapes. But even in such a grape paradise there can be problems. Like most of the old plantings in Napa Valley, Peju’s vines were originally planted on root stock not resistant to the devastating phylloxera louse. In addition, the old vines were coming to the end of their productive years and the blocks of Colombard were not the ideal varietal for Rutherford. In 1990 the decision was made to replant.*

*Tony Peju was making wine himself by then and winning gold medals and critical accolades. He realized the greatest flavors in his wines were coming from an original 5.5 acre block of Cabernet Sauvignon. These*

*particular vines thrived in the Rutherford climate producing complex and multi-layered wine with unique characteristics. He replanted primarily with cuttings from that block, now called the “HB Clone”, and complemented the vineyard by growing Merlot and Cabernet Franc, the classic Bordeaux blend.*

*Today’s HB Vineyard is an outstanding example of Napa Valley viticulture. Vines are trained on vertical shoot position trellises and carefully manicured of excess lateral canes and leaves. Irrigation begins in late Spring, tapering off at veraison (turning of color) so the plant focuses energy on ripening, not growth. To intensify flavors, superfluous grape clusters are “dropped” allowing those remaining to get full benefit of the vine’s photosynthesis. Harvest can take place in several passes as crews select clusters at optimum ripeness.*

*“Whatever we hope to achieve in the bottle begins in the vineyard,” says Tony Peju. “We are fortunate to have found this vineyard and its ideal conditions for our reserve wines.”*

### ***Persephone Vineyard***

*As the reputation of Peju Province and the winery’s location on Highway 29 proved to be good for business, demand soon exceeded supply. By 1995, Tony Peju was buying Cabernet Franc grapes from Juliana Vineyards in nearby Pope Valley. He liked the grapes and subsequently bought Merlot and Chardonnay as well. “In 1996 a friend came to me with an offer to plant grapes on a Pope Valley property,” he recounts. “When I visited the intended site I saw a for sale sign on a property nearby, I learned that in fact there were two contiguous properties for sale and as it turned out I was able to acquire them both.”*

*Pope Valley is a section of the Napa Valley Appellation a few miles to the northeast of Rutherford, and St. Helena separated from them by Howell Mountain and the Vaca range. It is higher than Napa Valley, colder in winter, hotter in summer and without the abundance of water. But the region has been producing wine and wine grapes since the turn of the last century.*

*“We named our new vineyard Persephone,” continues Tony Peju, “after the goddess of Greek mythology. It is 350 acres at an elevation of 2000 feet and was the last level, plantable acreage available. It has three feet of loamy topsoil in many places, then 4-5 feet of shale. And fortunately we have water, three ponds and two wells.”*

*In 1997, 120 acres of the ranch was planted to Cabernet Sauvignon cloned from the HB Vineyard, as well as Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Syrah, Petit Verdot, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Zinfandel. Peju is pleased with the fruit. “Since I had previously purchased fruit from the area, I knew its potential. To me our Rutherford grapes have layers and layers of flavors. In Pope Valley the flavors are more focused—mountain flavors—so we blend and get great wines with both complexity and focus.”*

*The Persephone Vineyard enjoys the same careful attention to viticulture as the Rutherford Estate. It is trellised to vertical shoot position and crop yields are kept low. The cooler springtime temperatures in Pope Valley necessitate frost protection at the vineyard—unlike Rutherford—and summer’s heat means irrigation is required. Even with its proximity to Napa Valley, it feels remote. Winding roads through steep canyons lead to Pope Valley and the landscape is reminiscent of an earlier era in California history. Grazing land and ancient oaks still cover rolling foothills watched over by craggy mountain peaks. It is a terroir ideal for grapes especially under the demanding and watchful eye of Tony Peju.*

*“Persephone Vineyard is an extension of our style,” Peju explains. “It gives us a broader flavor palette from which to draw and that is a plus for any winemaker. We’ve already seen what a positive impact Persephone Vineyard wines have in the marketplace.”*

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