

Diamond Series



Frias Family Vineyard

In an era that has spawned a number of Mexican-American owned and operated wineries in California (Ceja, Robledo, Gustavo Thrace and others) one particular winery seems to have risen to the forefront in the lofty pursuit of the ultimate wine.

Napa Valley's Spring Mountain-based Frias Family Winery has earned the acclaim of both wine writers and industry periodicals for its incredible, full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignons. What's more, the future looks even brighter for this limited production winery.

None of this comes as a shock to owner Manuel Frias, 66, a native of Jalisco State in Mexico, who came to the United States in 1951.

"My father was already working in the San Francisco area," Manuel related, "and he filled out the paperwork to get my family admitted to the United States. There were nine of us in our party including my mother and myself. We got to Tijuana and a small mistake was found in our paperwork so we had to stay in a hotel there for six weeks until it was all straightened out. My uncle finally came and took us up to San Francisco."

The Frias family grew up in San Francisco's storied Mission District and Manuel eventually went to college where he achieved master's degrees in both Education & Administration and Counseling. A third master's in Spanish Literature is also part of his hard-earned educational portfolio.

While student teaching at the age of 30, Manuel Frias's Spanish-Basque roommate invited him to a wine tasting party that was held in a home in Rutherford in

the Napa Valley. When he awoke the following morning, Manuel Frias underwent a life-changing occurrence.

"When I woke up and saw how beautiful everything around me was I thought I was in paradise," Frias recounted. "I knew then if I ever had a chance to buy property it would have to be in Napa Valley."

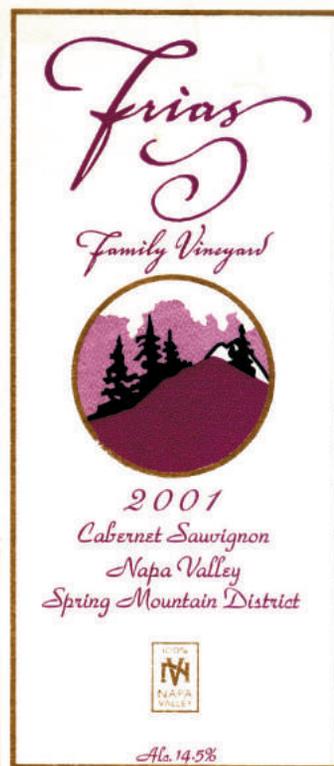
Frias developed his career in administration at San Francisco City College and continued his love affair with wine country. At every opportunity, he took his wife and

family on outings to Sonoma and Mendocino and poured over every wine-related book and magazine he could find. It would be ten years after his first vision before his dream of Napa Valley property would finally materialize.

In late 1977, Manuel Frias was able to trade three existing homes in San Francisco for 100 acres of hillside land that mostly fell into the prestigious Spring Mountain Appellation. His first vines were planted in 1985 and the resulting fruit was sold to winemaker Bob Levy at Merryvale.

350 cases of the 1991 vintage was the first actual release for the Frias Family Vineyard. Manuel Frias recalls that the first few years of growing were conducted under almost dry farming conditions. Since all of Frias' 13,000 vines are grown on hillside slopes, Frias feels that nature is allowed to devise her own growth patterns.

"For us it was necessary to improve our water supply in order for our vines to excel," he stated. "It is a laboriously slow process. Each year the vines get a little bigger and their yield improves. Since all our fruit is hillside-grown, the fruit is fairly intense. This leads to some really big, monster wines that our customers seem to really identify with."



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Manuel Frias

Frias's production has grown minutely since 1991 and today stands at slightly over 650 cases. A modest growth rate for the winery has been forecast for the future and depends on the continued growth of the vines. A 2,500 case goal is reachable in 3 to 5 years according to Manuel Frias' business plan that borders on the conservative.

Manuel Frias is also excited that two of his sons, Manny Jr., 29, and Fernando, 27, have joined him in the Frias Family Vineyard operation. Manny Jr. is involved with sales and some aspects of vineyard management while Fernando works a myriad of assorted jobs and attends the numerous trade shows associated with the winery.

The word around the wine industry is that most of the Mexican-American owned wineries represent solidly made wines that offer excellent price/value relationships. With accolades piling up from a number of sources, Frias Family Vineyard is no exception to that premise.

Manuel Frias is a marvelous example of a dedicated, hard working person who can live his dream and enjoy the fruits of his success. He is very happy with his lot in life and his picturesque surroundings. Would that we were all able to say the same.

Accolades and Tasting Notes



94-Points, *Wine & Spirits magazine's Top 15 Cabernets of the Year*- "This (wine) builds in complexity (after opening) the texture becomes increasingly more expansive as the flavors grow more precise. The first impression is pure Cabernet in its red mountain-berry fruit and firm, mountain-grown tannins without bulk. The fruit continues to extend, the texture becomes voluptuous and the ferrous character of the tannins turn toward fresh wild mushroom. A masterful wine grown to age a decade or two."

Robert Parker Jr.'s *The Wine Advocate*, "The Frias Vineyards premium boutique is of exceptional quality. . . Their Cabernets share the same minty, full-body and long lived characteristics as those made from the Oakville-Rutherford section."

Reorder

A mere 500 cases were produced of this outstanding wine. In fact, 500 cases have represented Frias Family Vineyard's total production each year since 1991 until adding a small amount of 2002 Napa Valley Merlot this year. Frias wines rarely, if ever, reach the store shelves. Once again, as a "friend of the winery", we were able to secure a significant portion of the available production. "It's a joy to share the Frias Family Vineyard 2001 Cabernet with you," says a proud Manny Frias, whose business card title simply reads: "Distributor, Grower, Son."

Winery Direct: \$65.95 / bottle

Diamond Series Price:

3 bottles-\$62.00 / bottle

6 bottles-\$58.00 / bottle

12 bottles-\$54.00 / bottle

(Plus shipping)

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