

Flora Adorned

NAPA VALLEY'S FLORA SPRINGS WINERY SHOWS OFF A NEW LABEL AND TAKES A THIRD-GENERATION APPROACH TO WINEMAKING



PHOTO: MERIDITH MAY

Nat Komes is third-generation family co-owner and General Manager of Flora Springs.

Flora never looked so elegant, and in tasting the 32-year-old winery's new releases, we can attest that she's showing her inner beauty as well.

Take **Flora Springs 2008 Soliloquy** (SRP \$23), for example, the winery's only Sauvignon Blanc, a lovely barrel-fermented testament to Oakville fruit. Supreme acidity and balance work with natural elements of ripe pear, peach, grapefruit and minerality within a floral creaminess. The Sauv Blanc program began in 1980 and the winery, garnering top scores right from the first vintage, never looked back.

"The vineyard was 20 years old back then," Nat Komes points out. The 41-year-old winery GM and third-generation family winery member adds, "and research from U.C. Davis says that we're the only ones with this existing Sauvignon Blanc clone." Broker offers have come in for the distinct clone, but the family opted to name it Soliloquy and keep it as their own heritage line.

"We have since lost some of the historic vineyard but replanted what we could with the existing clone," Komes says. Stainless steel-fermented in 2300-gallon neutral Yugoslavian oak casks (which do not influence flavor) and aged *sur lie*, Soliloquy is a wine inspired by the Loire Valley.

Flora Springs is one of the Napa Valley's top land-holders among family-owned wineries, with 650 acres farmed. "We only keep 20 percent of the fruit," Komes points out, explaining that the other 80 percent is sold to 44 premium Napa Valley producers.

A great glimpse of fruit and oak can be found in **Flora Springs 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon** (SRP \$36), a lusciously chewy, dusty-to-the-bone red that claims all Rutherford fruit.

And Flora Springs wouldn't be Flora Springs without its iconic **Trilogy** (SRP \$65), which blends three Bordelais grapes (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petit Verdot) and whose 2007 release—slated for November—takes a third-generation approach, with new oak research and a notably bigger, chewier, denser style, its fruit geared up to overdrive.

Winemaker Paul Steinauer knows how to work with the land. Komes agrees. "Bordeaux was the blueprint, but Napa Valley is the architectural masterpiece." —Meridith May

