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CONTACT: Lee Hodo, Four Tier Connect

Lee_hodo@att.net

707-332-0857



Keeping Up with Toad Hollow's Frankie Williams

Eight years after taking over the winery, Williams soundly upholds the brand's original intent with a stable business, a new wine and a new label design.

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It's been eight years since the passing of Todd Williams, founder of Toad Hollow Vineyards. Frankie Williams shattered the glass ceiling without much choice in the matter and took the reins of the company immediately after.

Since 2007 Frankie has kept the original intention of the brand: to deliver well-made, interesting and approachable wines. She has sustained the staff, has maintained a portfolio of regionally specific wines from the North Coast and is selling in all 50 states. To her longtime staff, she is the moxie and the power behind the company.

This is Toad Hollow's 21st year in business in the Russian River Valley. For Frankie, it's something of a coming-out year as the face of the brand while she introduces a new wine, introduces a new label and hits the road hard, visiting her supporters. Among her other accomplishments, she has:

- Streamlined the company portfolio while keeping core wines and exciting sourcing intact
- Weathered price increases while increasing distribution and sales
- Maintained Toad Hollow as a family-owned and -operated company
- Taken on national sales support by partnering with [V2 Wine Group](#)
- Maintained longtime and solid relationships with growers in the North Coast

Toad Hollow's Wines

To make up its portfolio, Toad Hollow uniquely selects regions from all over Northern California, based on their varietal distinctions. Growers in Mendocino, Carneros and Lodi, along with estate vineyards in the Russian River Valley, provide wines that fit the friendly and easy-to-drink Toad Hollow profile. Frankie continues strong relationships with these growers, some of whom have been part of the Toad Hollow family since the mid-1990s. The portfolio includes:

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○ Unoaked Chardonnay sourced from three renowned growers in <u>Mendocino County</u> (\$13.99)
○ A Dry Rosé of Pinot Noir from <u>Carneros</u> (\$11.99)
○ A Merlot (\$16.99) and a Pinot Noir (\$19.99) from Toad Hollow's estate vineyard in the <u>Russian River Valley</u>
○ Two sparkling wines (Risqué \$15.99; Amplexus \$17.99) from the <u>Limoux region of France</u>
○ AND THE NEWEST ADDITION: a <u>Lodi Cabernet Sauvignon</u> (\$18.99)

New Wine

Released nationally this summer is the 2013 Lodi Cabernet Sauvignon. The Lodi AVA is best known for Zinfandel, but growers with a specific interest in Cabernet have contributed to the wine with great results. The Clement Hills of the eastern Lodi Appellation were sourced for Cabernet fruit, and the wine was made by respected winemaker Greg La Follette. Frankie is thrilled with the resulting wine and the choice to source from a region getting great respect. She says, "I felt a region that has some of the oldest vines and wine families in the U.S. would lead us to the Cabernet style that fits our profile of wines."

Best recognized for its whimsical labels and for founder Todd Williams' wicked sense of humor, Toad Hollow hasn't strayed much from the fine art of making good wines while insisting that fun be at the brand's core. Continuing the legacy of fun presents few obstacles for Frankie with her sunny and lighthearted disposition. Vignettes on the company's website (www.toadhollow.com), the blog "Toad to Table" and new occasion-specific characterizations of Frankie created by designer Maureen Erickson are just a few indicators that the brand hasn't changed.

New Label

From the beginning, the Toad Hollow label, easily recognized by the large Toad character, was a key piece of the brand's marketing. The well-recognized character was a symbol of the brand. Animal labels have come and gone and retail and restaurant demands have changed, so Frankie revisited the label's look. Maureen Erickson, Frankie, and the V2 Wine Group sales team developed a label that maintains the sweetness of the Toad (Todd's nickname) but that more accurately reflects the seriousness of the wine.

For wine samples, photos, and support material, contact:
Lee Hodo: lee_hodo@att.net / 707-332-0857

