



WINEMAKER: Ken Brown

VINEYARD SOURCE: Nielson Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley. Planted by pioneer, Uriel Nielson in 1964, this property is Santa Barbara County's oldest vineyard. About half the fruit for our 2003 Chardonnay comes from the original vines, planted to the famed Wente clone. These small, intensely flavored berries bring concentration and complexity to the wine. The balance of the grapes comes from newer plantings, including several Dijon clones, which contribute a broad palette of vibrant fruit aromas and flavors.

VINTAGE: Harvest 2003 was a memorable one—it was Santa Maria Valley's warmest vintage on record and one of our earliest harvests ever. The growing season began with unseasonably warm winter temperatures that triggered budbreak in late January, nearly a month ahead of normal. Rain, wind and cool weather experienced during the May bloom period caused poor fruit set in some clusters and lightened yields. Summer temperatures were above average, but the warm conditions helped promote better natural balance in the grapes, tempering the naturally high acids found in Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay.

WINEMAKER'S COMMENTS: This extremely small bottling of Chardonnay comes from a vineyard I have worked with for more than 20 years. The old vines are especially expressive, so a minimalist approach to winemaking allows the character and integrity of the fruit to shine through. The grapes were hand picked and gently pressed as whole clusters. After settling in tank for 12 to 24 hours, the juice was gravity racked to 60-gallon French oak barrels for fermentation. The wine was 100% barrel fermented with 100% malo-lactic fermentation. The Chardonnay remained in barrel for nine months before being bottled in August 2004.

This Chardonnay is silky and rich with fresh aromas of golden delicious apple, pear, white peach and honey accented by hints of cinnamon, clove and a mineral, seashell component. A framework of crisp natural acidity gives way to a swell of silkiness toward the finish. The excellent structure and well-defined fruit character ensure this will be a long-lived Chardonnay.

TECHNICAL DATA

T.A.: 7.20 g/l

pH: 3.28

Alcohol: 13.7%

Sugg. Retail Price: \$30.00

Production: 45 cases