



**VINEYARD SOURCES:** 100% *Nielson Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley*. Founded by pioneer, Uriel Nielson in 1964, this property is Santa Barbara County's oldest vineyard. The estate has been replanted using cuttings from the original old vines, which included the famed Wente clone of Chardonnay. The small, intensely flavored berries bring concentration, complexity and a broad palette of vibrant fruit aromas and flavors to the wine.

**VINTAGE:** Mother Nature set the stage for a challenging vintage in 2011 with a hard freeze in January and frost in April, causing damage to the buds and green tissue in certain vineyards. Spring and summer brought below average temperatures, which resulted in a long, cool growing season. This, combined with lower crop yields, fostered excellent development of depth and complexity in the fruit. Chardonnay from the Nielson Vineyard was harvested on September 30 just prior to the onset of a light rain event in early October.

**WINEMAKING:** This small bottling of Chardonnay comes from a vineyard Ken has worked with for more than 30 years. The vines are especially expressive, and Ken's "old world" approach to winemaking adds richness and silkiness that complement the vibrant character of the fruit. The grapes were handpicked and gently pressed as whole clusters. After settling in tank for 24 hours, the juice was racked to 60-gallon French oak barrels for fermentation. The wine was 100% barrel fermented with 75% malo-lactic fermentation to protect the integrity of the fruit. The Chardonnay then aged *sur lie* for 10 months in French oak barrels, with 17% new French oak, and was bottled in August 2012.

**TASTING NOTES:** This Chardonnay is elegant and beautifully balanced with fresh aromas of Fuji apple and pear accented by hints of citrus, guava and cinnamon spice. These components will gradually evolve toward aromas of honey, pear and hazelnut as the wine develops. A rich, silky texture intertwined with a thread of graceful natural acidity carry through to an opulent, seamless finish. As experienced in past vintages of Nielson Chardonnay, this wine will enjoy exceptional ageability.

#### TECHNICAL DATA

T.A.: 6.3 g/l

pH: 3.33

Alcohol: 14.2%

Production: 138 cases