



2007 DIERBERG VINEYARD CHARDONNAY SANTA MARIA VALLEY

THE VINEYARD

Dierberg Vineyard is situated atop a sandy loam mesa above the South Bank of the Santa Maria River. The ranch features a series of gently rolling hills and soils that are uncharacteristic of the growing area. Small knolls of sand at the eastern end of Block One contribute freshness and raciness to the wines; while hidden lenses of loamy clay scattered towards the western edge seem to produce wines with more power and structure. We like to think of our vineyard as a little corner of Burgundy in Santa Maria.

Wines from the Dierberg Vineyard take a long time to evolve and unwind, making them rewarding candidates for a sojourn in the wine cellar.

THE VINTAGE

Drought-level rainfall and severe winter freezes during the December holidays started the growing season in an atypical fashion. Many young shoots were stunted due to the freezes and only began to show acceptable vigor when we plowed under our "green manure" cover crop consisting of oats, bell beans, vetch and peas in late spring. Conditions during bloom time were ideal, with moderate temperatures and an absence of our normal winds, and completed in less than a week. Meanwhile, set was erratic from shoot to shoot, with some shoots setting as many as three clusters while others set none. In spite of low winter rainfall, weather during the growing season was generally cool and we irrigated very little, only 3 to 5 gallons per vine for the entire season. Veraison was very even and weather during harvest was warm and steady. We harvested a slightly below average crop load at a leisurely pace during the first two weeks of September. Acidities were scintillating and alcohols were moderate. In 2007 our newer plantings of the Robert Young clone yielded their first significant crop, lending freshness and structure to our final Dierberg Chardonnay blend.

WINEMAKING

The winemaking techniques employed for our Chardonnays closely resemble those used for centuries in Burgundy. Cold fruit is "whole cluster" pressed and the resulting juice is settled briefly at cellar temperature. We like to keep as many solids as possible in contact with the juice, causing us to remove only the very heaviest of the lees—essentially what dust from the vineyard comes into the winery on the grapes.

The juice is transferred to barrel lightly sulfured but uninoculated and allowed to begin fermentation on its own yeast. Occasionally, commercial yeast is added to certain lots two thirds of the way through fermentation as an insurance policy against stuck fermentations (when the yeast is unable to convert all the sugar in the wine to alcohol). For those lots that are allowed to finish fermentation naturally, a small amount of yeast nutrient is added at one third of the way through fermentation. Some of the various lots of wine that make up our final blend go through partial malolactic fermentation on their own, neither encouraged or inhibited by the winemaking staff. Lees are stirred biweekly for 1 year.

During the winter, after 16 months in barrel, the finished wine is racked from its lees, lightly fined with bentonite, isinglass and skim milk and is bottled unfiltered.

THE WINE

Chardonnays from the Dierberg Vineyard are characterized by their strong impression of acidity and by a finish that lingers for nearly a minute on the palate. They are among the rare Californian Chardonnays that will gracefully improve with age for 5 years, or more.

Immediate impressions of lemon curd and orange blossom are followed by aromas of hazelnut, allspice and Meyer lemon. On the palate, the wine is sleek and refined, with a lithe texture and mouth-watering acidity. Flavors of citrus—lemon rind, tangelo and lemon-grass—echo the aromatic impressions of this Chardonnay, creating seamless wine, at once powerful and impeccably balanced. Enjoy this wine with subtly flavored hard cheeses to accentuate its freshness and subtle nutty impressions, or cellar for 2 to 3 years and savor with heartier seafood and pork dishes.

Alcohol: 14.1 %

pH: 3.11

Total Acid: 9.8 g/L

Cooperage 40% new French 400L barrels. Balance aged in neutral oak. Malolactic Fermentation Roughly 20% of the final blend.

DIERBERG

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