



2002 Chardonnay – Owl Ridge Vineyard (Russian River Valley)

The Owl Ridge Vineyard is in the Russian River Valley Appellation of Sonoma County. It was planted with premium Dijon clones. The vineyard receives 180 degree sun, when available, and a direct cool breeze coming up the Russian River from the ocean. The combination of sun to develop flavor and the cool wind to help retain acidity, along with outstanding vineyard management (by Charlie Chenoweth), gave this fruit exciting flavors and kept it in perfect condition. The vineyard produced slightly more than two tons to the acre, which accentuated the flavors and richness. There are approximately two acres of Pinot Noir and two acres of Chardonnay.

The 2002 vintage was marked by a mild summer with unusually warm days around harvest. This warmth made the picking decision difficult, because it would have to be based upon flavors of the fruit and not the sugars that were beyond the normal picking point. Finally, the weather cooled down and the sugars came back into balance before harvest. The 2002 harvest has turned out to be outstanding, with ripe fruit and great balance of acidity.



Harvest was at sunrise on a foggy day in September of 2002; the fruit was handpicked and sorted at the picking bins to remove leaves and other unwanted material. The fruit arrived at the winery at a temperature of about 54 degrees.

At the winery, the whole clusters were slowly pressed over two hours. The juice was then settled overnight and put-to-barrel the following morning. At that time, I added two types of yeast, one to accentuate the aromatics and one for texture and richness of flavor. I used about 35% new French oak barrels. The wine was cold fermented, never exceeding 70 degrees. It was stirred three times a week for the first two months and never again from that point onward. The stirring was to give the wine an outstanding texture on the palate, but too much stirring would result in a wine with a strong yeasty or leesy character.

The wine was put through 100 percent malolactic (ML) fermentation. The particular ML strain that I used did not impart that intense buttery character that some strains have a tendency to produce. The wine was then racked off the lees

after eight months and was bottled in late July of 2003. Prior to bottling, the wine was sterile filtered. We produced only 295 cases.

This Chardonnay is very similar to the highly successful 2001 vintage. It offers amazing aromas of pear, green apple, lemon custard, and pineapple, with a slight marzipan character. The wine, for being so rich on the palate, has a very crisp clean finish with a long lingering flavor of tropical fruit and brown sugar.

Additional Technical Information:

- Harvest Sugar: 24.7 Brix
- Ph at Harvest: 3.43
- Ph at Bottling: 3.48
- Total Acidity at Harvest: .72 g/l
- Total Acidity at Bottling: .68 g/l
- Final Alcohol: 14.3%
- Yeast: M2, CY3079, VL1, Cepage and native strains
- Malolactic culture from CHR HANSEN

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