

FORT ROSS

VINEYARD & WINERY · SONOMA COAST

2009 CHARDONNAY · FORT ROSS VINEYARD · SONOMA COAST · FORT ROSS-SEAVIEW

OVERVIEW

From our mountain vineyard, now part of the new Fort Ross-Seaview American Viticultural Area that includes the few steep mountain top vineyards that overlook the Sonoma Coast, Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery produces limited quantities of single vineyard, Estate grown, cool-climate Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinotage. With spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean less than one mile away, the vineyard is divided into 30 separate blocks, one-half to two acres in size, that rapidly fall from 1700 down to 1200 feet above sea level. Owners, Lester and Linda Schwartz and their small crew began preparing the 50 acre vineyard in 1994. It took them 4 years of preparation before they could begin planting the first vines in 1998.

VINTAGE

2009 was an excellent year for the early ripening Pinot Noir and Chardonnay on the Sonoma Coast. The year began with a warm January but soon turned cold. The year was generally cooler than usual throughout the major part of the growing season and this coolness gave the wines their vibrant character. In the 3rd week of September there was a heat spike that concentrated the flavors that had been teasingly on the verge. The entire vineyard was harvested in four exhausting days to capitalize on the even ripening, intense flavors and luscious fruit. All grapes were harvested and in barrel before the damaging rains of October.

WINEMAKING

The grapes for this Chardonnay were handpicked during the cool hours of the night in small five-gallon buckets. The fruit was hand sorted in the vineyard and gently whole cluster pressed at the winery. After pressing, the juice was put into barrels and underwent primary and malolactic fermentation in a combination of 30% new and 70% neutral French oak. This discrete use of new oak allowed the fruit to shine. During extended blending trials that produced countless blends from different permutations of the field selections, blocks and barrels, we determined that our 2009 Chardonnay was seamlessly balanced when all of the barrels were blended together, including those we had set aside for the Reserve bottling. The result is that there will be no separate Reserve Chardonnay in 2009. This wine is comprised of 65% small berried old Hyde field selection chosen for its richness and sleek structure and 35% small berried old Wente for its luscious fruit and grace. These heritage field selections have full, complex flavors that are intensified by the small size of both the bunches and the berries.

TASTING NOTES

This golden Chardonnay finely balances layers of intense fruit with the natural acidity and minerality characteristic of the Fort Ross coastal climate. Generous aromas of white flowers, autumnal pear and honeydew melon lead a complex palate of succulent apricot, sweet peaches with a drop of honey and spiced hazelnuts. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered contributes to the seamless silky texture and lengthy focused finish.

COMPOSITION: 100% Chardonnay
APPELLATION: Sonoma Coast : Fort Ross-SeaView AVA
ESTATE GROWN: Fort Ross Vineyard
SELECTIONS: 65% Old Hyde - 35% Wente field selections
AGING: 10 months French; 30% new oak
ALCOHOL 14.5%
BOTTLING: Unfiltered & Unfiltered
HARVESTED: September 26, 2009
BOTTLED: August 11, 2010
RELEASE DATE: Fall 2011
CASES PRODUCED: 863 cases, 750ml
WINEMAKER: Jeff Pisoni