



WINEMAKER'S NOTES

We love Chardonnay that is just the essence of the grape itself, showing purity of aroma and taste. So we like to devote some of our production to wine fermented in stainless steel tanks and aged in stainless steel barrels. Our grapes are well-suited to this style of winemaking, as they have robust acidity even with the high sugar content of well-ripened fruit.

In France, they grow Chardonnay in Chablis, the northernmost district of Burgundy. There the wines are produced with little or no oak treatment. They are most often described as “flinty”. While cooler than most of the Santa Barbara County, Sweeney Canyon produces Chardonnay that is much “fruitier”, but still has the minerality that typifies Chablis. We think it is a great combination of the new world and the old.

We have also found that our Unwooded Chardonnay has excellent aging potential. When white wines are barrel fermented or barrel aged, oxygen is introduced into the winemaking process. Regardless of the treatment from fermentation through bottling, the wine is likely to oxidize much more quickly than a purely “stainless” wine. So an Unwooded Chardonnay can age in the bottle for 10 or more years. This bottle aging will allow flavors and complexities that one might otherwise attribute to an oak barrel.

Our 2009 Unwooded Chardonnay has elements of pear and citrus on the nose, and follows on the palate with Meyer Lemon, cherimoya, white pepper, and steel. The finish is long and mouth-filling. This wine would benefit from at least five years of bottle aging, so we wouldn't want to drink it before 2014. Our experience with stainless steel fermented Chardonnays we made in 2000 and 2001 has taught us this. These wines are still drinking well without the slightest hint of oxidation. But it is not unusual to drink a 20 year old Chablis Grand Cru that is lively and fresh, with that greenish glint the French call “grenouille verte.”

Sláinte!

Kristi Marks, Winemaker