



Winery & Vineyards

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## 2001 CHARDONNAY “Grand Cuvee”

### *Santa Ynez Valley*

#### *Winemaker's Notes:*

It's amazing how things change. It used to be that the only vineyard, as you headed west toward Lompoc on Highway 246, was ours; and the only other vineyards within a five mile radius of us were Santa Barbara Winery's and Sanford's. Twenty years later, and *shazam*, all of a sudden there are grapes on the other side of the fence! Of course Sanford and Lafond have been here from the viticultural beginning, and we closely followed. But now, names like Gainey, Parker, Foley, Fiddlehead, Beringer, and Melville have popped up bringing with them a roaring “garagiste” scene. Wines from this region for the last couple of vintages are starting to boggle the mind. People are starting to write and talk about the area. The next twenty years should also be very interesting.

For those of you who know our wines, you know we do this thing called “Grand Cuvee”. Almost from the beginning, Grand Cuvee has represented the best Chardonnay or Pinot Noir that we grew on our ranch. Farming roughly forty acres of these varieties in the right soils and in the right climate, we always tried to capture in our Grand Cuvee the best of our best. To this day, “best” is still the fundamental concept. But as our area goes through a revolution, so with it goes Grand Cuvee. Our old frontier for excellence used to be our fence line. As we enter a new era, that frontier is now the newly drawn lines of the Santa Rita Hills.

For the first time, our Grand Cuvee Chardonnay is a blend of fruit from our vineyard, and for this vintage, Mt. Carmel. Also, for the first time is the fact that this is an unfiltered cuvée, making it the first white wine I have ever done this with. Unfiltered red wines are a much easier proposition because their darkness hides any haze. For years I have been examining other people's unfiltered whites. Looking at the haziness that I usually see, I often conclude, “yea, congratulations, it sure looks unfiltered.” I always thought that if, through rigorous craftsmanship, I could eliminate the haze, I would consider bottling an unfiltered Chardonnay. After years of thinking about how some of my tanks would need to be designed to make this possible, we finally put the ideas into action. Depending on how stable future Grand Cuvees are in terms of their primary and malolactic fermentations, we will be trying to avoid the filter from here on.

So there is a lot going on. As I discussed last year in these notes, a new approach to canopy management is leading to riper grapes, and has allowed us to drop sulfur out of our spraying program. Better winemaking will allow us to not filter white wines from time to time in the future. A revolution of sorts has led us to blending together wines that would have previously been held separate. But the object is still to make it great, and then call it Grand Cuvee.

#### *Technical Notes:*

VARIETAL: 100% Chardonnay, Santa Ynez Valley

86% Babcock Vineyard, 14% Mt. Carmel Vineyard

VINIFICATION: 100% barrel fermented; 100% malolactic fermentation

TIME IN BARRELS: 10 months on lees in 100% one year old French oak barrels

TA: 7.0 g/L                      pH: 3.47                      ALCOHOL: 13.5%

BOTTLING DATE: August 7, 2002                      CASES PRODUCED: 1,737 cases 750 ml

RELEASE DATE: March, 2003