



Winery & Vineyards

## 2003 Chardonnay

*Santa Barbara County*

### Winemaker's Notes:

Over the past few years I have been doing my best not to sound too much like a wine geek when writing these notes. With all the innovations in farming, and all the new grape sources that have come on line, it has been fairly easy to talk about things other than just a simple discussion of *this wine*, or *that wine*. Well, now I'm stuck. Compared to 2002, absolutely nothing changed in the production of this Santa Barbara County bottling of Chardonnay. Oh sure, the percentages of our Estate fruit and Careaga fruit have changed slightly, but it's basically the same old juice from the same impeccably farmed Chardonnay vineyards, fermented at cool temperatures in order to accentuate the wine's fruit.

But then again, isn't that what we want, success? Isn't that why chefs often use the *same* recipes, because they work? So, with nothing else left to do, it looks like I'm going to have to resort to being a wine geek and tell you about this wine.

Once again, this wine has New and Old World elements. With the grape's long hang time in a cool but sun-drenched growing season, the more domineering side is the intense, dead ripe, New World fruit. The wine's aroma is like a beautiful fusion of lemon cream pie and Pipin apple, with a hint of peach. Its Old World expression still comes from that uncanny, fresh minerality that this bottling has displayed for the past few years. The flavors are like a mildly-creamy, sweet-tart pineapple that wants to be both racy and rich at the same time.

But there is also something about this wine that is very exotic. While it is all Chardonnay, it smells a bit like Riesling. I think it's that hint of peach that does it. I have seen this a couple of times before, and interestingly enough, it was in the first couple of Mt. Carmel Chardonnays that we made around ten years ago. That Riesling quality in those wines seemed to dissipate as the wines aged out in their barrels. This time we seemed to have captured it in the bottle. Will it last? My guess is that it too will give way to the stronger elements green apple and citrus, but wow, what a wine!

I can tell you what my Dad will say about this wine. He will say "this is the best Santa Barbara County bottling you've ever done." (He says it every year.) This year, I might be inclined to agree.

### Technical Notes:

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

56% Chardonnay, Babcock Estate, Santa Ynez Valley

44% Chardonnay, Careaga Vineyard, Los Alamos Valley

VINIFICATION: 100% Stainless Fermentation; 0% Malolactic Fermentation

pH: 3.3      TA: 8.2 g/L      RESIDUAL SUGAR: Dry      ALCOHOL: 13.4%

AGED: 7 months, 20% new French oak

BOTTLING DATE: May 2004

RELEASE DATE: June 2004

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 2,193 cases 12/750ml