



2004
CHARDONNAY, Top Cream
Estate Grown - Santa Rita Hills

Winemaker's Notes:

In the manufacturing of milk, the cream, or top cream, as it is sometimes called, is that fatty portion of the product that rises to the top during processing. Everyone is familiar with it. It's the stuff that makes cornflakes and lots of other things taste really good. Short of using butter, a top cream is often the business end of many of the culinary art's richest dishes. In our language, the very word cream is often taken to mean the richest or the best of something.

Twenty five years ago, my mom and dad planted the first vineyard on the 15 acre bench in the middle of our ranch. Its top soil is a 2 to 3 foot deep, grayish brown, gravelly loam that offers life to its vines on top of an ominously impervious layer of sandstone. It is a lean top soil in terms of fertility, and it definitely governs the vigor and morphology of the vines that grow in it. It is this soil that I refer to as this vineyard's Top Cream. As a terroir it is ideal for growing the kind of Chardonnay that spreads its wings when put through a full-blown Burgundian style of winemaking. It is especially appropriate if one considers that the facets of a Burgundian style; the barrels, the malolactic fermentation, and the lees contact, synergize for the rendering of a Chardonnay that smells and tastes, among other things, very creamy. The trick to it all is to have the right Chardonnay grapes to begin with, and the trick to having the right grapes is to have the right soil. Indeed, the trick is in having the right Top Cream.

I don't usually use other people's descriptions because I'm pretty good at describing the wines myself. But in this case I can say it no better than Wendy Van Horn of Santa Barbara's Wine Cask. "Creamy, layered, refined, complex, long, elegant, substantial, weightless elegance, lemon curd, pear, apple, nut butter – these are a few of the descriptors jotted in my notebook – the words rush out in a hedonistic tumble. Bottom line, this is exceptional."

Thank you Wendy.

Bryan

Technical Notes:

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

100% Chardonnay, Babcock Estate, Santa Barbara County (Santa Rita Hills)

VINIFICATION:

100% Barrel Fermentation; 57% Malolactic Fermentation

TIME IN BARRELS: 8 months; 100% French oak, 53% new

pH: 3.27 TA: 7.0 g/L RESIDUAL SUGAR: Dry ALCOHOL: 15 %

BOTTLING DATE: August, 2005

RELEASE DATE: February, 2006

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 222 cases 750ml