



2008 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 corn flakes 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 layer of 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 often smells and tastes, among other things, 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.

Borrowing these words from Wendy Van Horn, a wine business colleague of mine, “TOP CREAM produces wines that are creamy, layered, refined, complex, long, elegant, substantial, weightless elegance, lemon curd, pear, apple, nut butter, . . .”

With this being my 5th TOP CREAM Chardonnay, I think it is also interesting to note, these have all been unfiltered wines. With a big red wine, a little cloudiness is almost a welcome sight for most of the cognoscenti. It's like confirmation that the wine has not been overly processed or bruised. But white wines are so transparent that *floaties* and other debris are frowned upon. The challenge; how to get it off the lees, out of the barrels, fined and in the bottle this clear? Well, after 26 years, what can I say, we figured it out.

Cheers, Bryan

Technical Notes:

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

100% Chardonnay, Babcock Estate, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County

VINIFICATION:

100% Barrel Fermentation; 100% Malolactic Fermentation

TIME IN BARRELS: 10 months; 100% french oak, 40% new

FINISHED WINE: Residual Sugar: Dry, pH: 3.28; TA: 7.8 g/L; ALCOHOL: 15.0 %

PRODUCTION: 358 cases, 12/750ml

BOTTLING DATE: August, 2009 RELEASE DATE: November 2009

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$40.00