



WINERY & VINEYARDS

## 2005 CHARDONNAY "OASIS"

Loma Verde Vineyard, Santa Barbara County (Los Alamos)

### Winemaker Notes:

This year's Top Cream Chardonnay has a foil, and what a good foil it is. Oasis is a small south-east facing hillside in the Loma Verde Vineyard, just off Highway 101 as you head north out of Los Alamos. If you know what you are looking for you can see the peculiar white streaks of soil that run under the vine rows. If you were touring around the west side of Paso Robles, you wouldn't think it peculiar at all. You see, in Paso's West Side, limestone abounds. But in Santa Barbara County, it's about as common as water in the desert. And yet, there it sits in a little two acre pocket of Loma Verde, at the end of the rows of block 3C, as they drop down from the bench upon which 80% of the block rests.

Was I expecting to find this little enigmatic piece of dirt? Not really. Over a year ago I was touring the vineyard with General Manager Tavo Acosta. Loma Verde in its entirety is about 218 acres. I was looking for 20 or so nice tons of reasonably priced Chardonnay to blend into my regular wine. Tavo was quite proud of most of the Ranch. The vines were healthy with balanced crops. It was obviously a reflection of someone who knew what he was doing. That's when I saw these scrawny yellowish vines struggling on a little hillside at the end of this one block. It was by far the most scraggly thing we'd seen, and I had the feeling Tavo was accelerating to get past it as soon as possible.

"If I find an area that I like, and it only takes up a portion of one of your blocks, is it possible to pick only the ends of the rows that are in that area?" I asked Tavo. "I don't see why not," he said. "What's that white stuff in the dirt right there?" I asked. "Limestone," he said.

"Is that why these vines are struggling?" I asked. "Yea," he said hesitatingly. "Is this section available?" I asked. I knew what he was thinking, "Oh boy, another nutcase winemaker."

But to make a long story short, Tavo has been very open minded. Since then we put together a deal. While we are still doing 20 tons of nice Chardonnay for the regular wine, we are also doing this thing from Chardonnay vines that are growing in a spot that used to be a little embarrassing. With a crazy winemaker actually showing an interest, Tavo has done a great job of helping its vines to find the vigor and vitality that they desperately needed. The first time I saw Oasis I was only impressed with the soil. Now I see balanced vines. Now I'm thinking Grand Cru.

Right after I bottled this wine, I gave a couple samples to Tavo who told me he was looking forward to tasting it with his boss. I got a call from him the other day. "Can we get a little more of that Oasis?"

Tavo is not in the Terroir Club. But it's pretty hard to say no to the grower.

### Technical Notes:

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

100% Chardonnay, Loma Verde Vineyard, Santa Barbara County, Los Alamos

VINIFICATION:

100% Barrel Fermentation; 100% Malolactic Fermentation

TIME IN BARRELS: 9 months; 100% French oak, 53% new

pH: 3.26      TA: 6.7 g/L      RESIDUAL SUGAR: Dry      ALCOHOL: 15 %

BOTTLING DATE: July, 2006      RELEASE DATE: October, 2006

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 130 cases 750ml.