

TOR

TOR Chardonnay Durell Chardonnay, Wente Clone 2005

Vineyard

For several decades Durell Vineyard has been well known as one of California's premier Chardonnay vineyards. I, personally, have followed the Kistler bottlings for over a decade and marveled at the richness and minerality of each wine. They scream of Durell's terrior. The Wente clone for California winemakers is synonymous with small crops and small berries. This translates to a high skin to flesh ratio, which translates to a high concentration of varietal flavor. We farm "by-acre" with Durell with the sole purpose of finding a balance of crop to vintage. Most years it is around 2 tons per acre, many years less. It is rumored the first "Wente Clone" cuttings made it to California many decades ago in a suitcase. The cuttings were from Romanine Conte's Montrache block.

The soil in our Durell block is goulding sandy clay loam. This soil is rich with dyatamatous earth, and millions of years ago probably was a sand bar in the middle of a large prehistoric lake. These soils, combined with vineyard manager Steve Hill's two plus decades of brilliant management and the vineyards cool climate are what make this one of California's great Chardonnay vineyards.

Vintage

2005 is unlike any vintage in recent memory. Early bud break followed by wet, cool spring and cool summer. When the fruit set we witnessed a larger than normal crop, so we dropped more than 20% fruit at all our by-acre vineyard sites. We also dropped more fruit after verasion, hoping and praying the smaller crop would have the blessing of a long Indian summer to ripen. Prayers were answered and we picked into November for our reds. Beautiful fruit, mature flavors reflecting a growing season with the longest "hang time" I can remember in 30 years. Durell Vineyard was picked early morning October 7th 2006.

Winemaking

We pick all our vineyard sites at first light so the fruit reaches the winery cold to cool. The Chardonnay grapes are hand sorted, then transferred whole cluster to a gentle bladder press, then still cool to small French oak barrels for fermentation. It is important to keep the juice cool on its journey to barrel preserving varietal character, each vineyard's identity.

Our Chardonnays are barrel fermented using only natural yeasts from the vineyard. Our desire is to never push the wine, but to let it take its own course. This Chardonnay fermented from November 2005 to June 2006, which is a very, very long fermentation. The wine remained in small French oak Saury barrels until bottling March 2007.

The Wine

This is the crispest bottling from us to date...more Burgundy to me than California. Smells like steam coming off wet granite on a hot rainy morning, poached pears, vanilla. The entry on the palate starts plush, narrows with the fine acidity, the continues for a long time. This is one of the reasons I serve this at home for dinner often. Hopefully I won't develop a "house palate". Those who know me say, "fat chance".



"It exhibits admirable notes of lightly buttered popcorn, white citrus, white peach, and a beautiful long, rich, leesy mouthfeel with terrific texture and a heady finish"

Rating 91-94

**By Robert M. Parker, Jr.
"The Wine Advocate"**