

T O R

TOR Chardonnay **Durell Vineyard Wente Clone, 2006**

Vintage

The 2006 vintage was a cool vintage for the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Bud break happened a little earlier than 'normal' and the wet ground from all the rain from the winter allowed for the vines to set a healthy crop. We thinned the vineyards back through multiple fruit dropping passes to the crop level we desired. This season was marked more by steady growing season without any significant heat spikes or rains other than a bit of rain in the first week of October. The Chardonnays from 2006 show tremendous minerality and some of the healthiest analytical numbers we have seen.

Vineyard

For several decades Durell Vineyard has been well known as one of California's premier Chardonnay vineyards. I have followed the Kistler bottlings for over a decade and marveled at the richness and minerality of each wine. They scream of Durell's terroir. 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 for the sole purpose of finding a balance of crop to vintage. Most years it is around 2 tons per acre, many years less. The soil in our Durell block is goulding sandy clay loam. This soil is rich with diatomaceous 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 vineyard's cool climate are what make this one of California's great Chardonnay vineyards.

Winemaking

We pick all our vineyard sites at first light so the fruit reaches the winery already cool. The Chardonnay grapes are hand sorted to remove any un-ripe berries then transferred whole cluster to a gentle bladder press. Finally, the still cool juice is transferred to small French oak barrels for fermentation. It is important to keep the juice cool on its journey to barrel to prevent oxidation as well as preserve varietal and vineyard character. Our Chardonnays are 100% 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 2006 to July 2007 which is a very, very long fermentation. This wine remained in small French oak Saury barrels on its original lees until bottling March 2007.

The Wine

Explosively aromatic nose consisting of spiced apples, pears, flint and flowers. On the palate there is beautiful purity of fruit and focus. The fruit is almost more crystalline in its intensity. An almost crushed stone minerality focuses the fruit and creates a very bracing and clean impression on the palate. Stone fruits, talc, cloves and sweet oak tail off to a long smooth finish. A beautiful combination of lean French precision and California richness of fruit.



"Scents of lychee nuts, white peaches, white currants, honeysuckle, tropical fruits and background toasty oak, all buttressed by zesty acidity."

Rated 92-94 by
Robert M. Parker, Jr.,
"The Wine Advocate"