

# T O R

## TOR Chardonnay Durell Vineyard Wenté Clone, 2008

Blend: 100% Chardonnay (heritage Wenté clone)  
Production: 100 cases  
Release date: July 2010

### Vintage

I've been through 33 vintages and can't remember one like 2008. All the rain came in what seemed like a few days early in the year. By late March we were at 60% normal, and never moved beyond, marking two years of drought conditions. Spring was wild—more frost days than I can remember. The frosty bud break, then a wet off-and-on bloom and set gave us a very small crop to work with the rest of the year. Due to the uneven set we had to go into the vineyard several times to work on cluster uniformity. At the end, thanks to a glorious Indian summer, I brought in what I considered the some of the most concentrated, flavorful grapes yet for our wines. When the last grape came in we were 44% off normal crop size—but the quality factor is extremely high.

### Vineyard

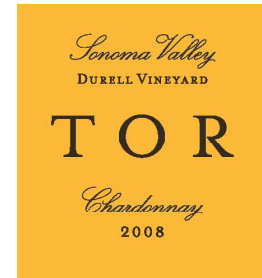
For several decades Durell Vineyard has been renowned as one of California's premier Chardonnay vineyards. I have followed the Kistler bottlings for over a decade and marveled at the richness and minerality of each wine. They scream of Durell's terrior. For California winemakers the Wenté clone is synonymous with small crops and small berries. This translates to a high skin-to-flesh ratio, which translates into 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 was probably a sand bar in the middle of a 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. We picked our block on Sand Hill at Durell on September 12.

### Winemaking

2008 gave us about half of the quantity that we normally picked from our block in Durell, and as you would expect the wine shows off more minerality and nerve than in most years. Yes, the wine is concentrated—but still has that wet granite, Burgundian character I associate with the Wenté clone Chardonnays from Durell. Cold grapes to morning press, direct to barrel for fermentation, unfiltered, unfined. We do closely monitor fermentation temperatures, and focus on the integration of oak to wine. Bâttonage depends on solids, and taste. In the end we seek a wine that maintains minerality, a certain essence of terrior, is handmade in every way, and in very small amounts.

### Winemaker's tasting notes

On the nose this shows white flowers/honeysuckle/apricot and a touch of sea spray. The palate is sweet and rich with bracing acidity, quince/white peaches/wet stone/cloves. The finish is long and firm and shows all the qualities of Chablis in a ripe vintage.



"(\$53; just bottled) Bright yellow-gold color. Stone fruits complicated by butterscotch, nuts and musky lees. Then supple, broad and fresh on the palate, with apple, pear and peach fruit complicated by notes of nutmeg, honey, salted caramel and minerals. Finishes broad and sweet, with considerable early appeal."

Rated (90) by  
Stephen Tanzer  
"International Wine Celler"