

Davis Family Vineyards

2004 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Dutton Ranch

I think it is official, - there is a backlash to the backlash...about ten years ago a trend started that was referred to as ABC - Anything But Chardonnay. I have been quoted in the press a few times for saying "simple Chardonnay is simply Chardonnay and great Chardonnay is great wine."

Since we only make a few hundred cases of our Dutton Ranch Chardonnay it has always sold out long before the next vintage is ready but the past few years it has disappeared more quickly than ever. The most recent vintage was the fastest sell out (3 months) in the last 8 years.

Steve Heimoff, editor of the *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* in his March 2006 issue wrote an article about the great California Chardonnays of the 2002, 2003 and 2004 vintages; in this article he named us as one of California's Most Dependable Chardonnay producers and rated our wine **91 points**. I loved that, however the thing I loved most about the article was the responses from so many restaurant and trade people commenting on the popularity Chardonnay is regaining, and how much those who look down their nose at Chardonnay are missing.

Chardonnay in general continues to get better as vintners discover the very best coastal areas for the grape, like our Dutton Ranch vineyard here in the Russian River Valley. The extremely cool climate enables the grapes to stay on the vine for up to a month longer, increasing the layers and intensity of flavor. Winemakers are also learning more about fermentation techniques like wild yeast and other yeast strains that highlight the special nuances of each vineyard.

I use mostly native or wild yeasts that occur naturally in the vineyard; they are much riskier to manage but by taking these kinds of chances you get more interesting wines, wines with more complexity. You will notice with this 2004 in particular, that it really changes in the glass over the course of the meal or the cocktail hour. The apples, pears and brioche-like aromas you notice in the beginning give way to floral/honeysuckle notes as the wine comes alive in your glass followed by that consistent lemon custard core that is always in our Chardonnay.

Another big benefit to these coastal areas is the nice acidity that the wines retain - I don't think that the acid should be tart or sharp, but take note when you taste this wine that while the wine is on your tongue and as you swallow, the richness is like glycerin, very round and smooth, but then there is a brightness to the wine in the finish that lifts the flavors up and really brings life to not only the wine but the foods you pair it with as well.

The backlash to the backlash against Chardonnay was very noticeable in the January reviews of the "*Top 100 Wines of the Year*" - several Chardonnays made those lists - ours included in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. I have been patiently waiting for the weather, trying to time the release of this wine with the perfect season for sipping. The craving for a glass of Chardonnay is my internal sign that Spring has sprung.

Davis Family Vineyards

52 Front Street, Healdsburg CA 95448

Phone: 707-569-0171 Fax: 707-569-0181 Toll Free 1-866-338-9463

©Davis Family Vineyards