

Davis Family Vineyards

2005 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Dutton Ranch

Chardonnay – the most popular white wine in the world – is to me, like a *chameleon*. Chardonnay adjusts well to many types of soils around the world. It is the core grape of Champagne, where the seasons are colder than most, the wine is very high in acid and when vinified with the traditions of that area, as we all know, turns out much different than the lush and rich mouthful grown here in California.

Chardonnay is often referred to as the “winemaker’s grape” because it can deliver good quality from a variety of techniques as well – new oak, old oak, or in stainless steel tank. It can be bottled early in the season or spend extended time in barrels....and upon release can drink wonderfully right away and the best ones age in the cellar taking on even more complexity, especially aromatics.

However, and in wine there always seems to be a *however*... this all means that good Chardonnay can come from a wide range of areas and from a wide range of techniques but great Chardonnay must be fussed over with even more attention, to separate it from the pack and to make it special...and yes, -- I can't help it – I do just that.

I nurture fanatically the vines with special attention to lowering yields to increase concentration and intensity of flavors and do lots of hand work with the vines, adjusting individual leaves, to increase air flow – reducing risk of mildew, Botrytis, etc. and balance the sunlight to the clusters for richer flavor and texture. Once in the winery we put the clusters directly into the press, never crushing them so our solids are lower and we eliminate a step, hoping to preserve extra character – this yields less juice but like always we are quality over quantity.

That fresh pressed juice is then chilled to 50 degrees for fermentation, an environment that barely allows the yeast to survive but helps to capture and preserve all the delicate aromas (along with all the fruit and spice in this 2005 you will notice a beautiful floral perfume as it opens in your glass) The yeast is all native or “wild” meaning more unpredictable but most times producing more layers than the commercial strains, but it requires more attention, patience and experience.

I use a combination of several barrels, all French Oak, but only from the coldest forests in France, because the trees grow more slowly producing a tighter grain in the wood, meaning more subtle, integrated oak character in the wine – to me toasty is good but oaky is bad...to take the balance of the oak one step further I ferment and age 15 to 20% of the wine in small stainless steel barrels so that when I make the final blend at bottling, I have a component that has no oak influence allowing me to dial in the balance exactly where I find it best for each vintage. Probably my favorite feature in Chardonnay’s adaptability is the way it is so flexible to drink...whether all by itself before dinner, as the salad course, or with a richness that pairs with almost any entree, from fish to pork or even veal! Chardonnay always makes me think of Spring - I time the release to you in Spring, because Chardonnay to me signals a change of season – from dinner by the fire to evenings on the patio.

Here is a Springtime Chardonnay favorite in our house-Enjoy!

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