



2005 CAITLIN'S RESERVE CHARDONNAY

BACKGROUND As the winemakers of the Oregon wine renaissance re-established vinifera grapes in the 1960's and 1970's, the wine regions of Northern Europe (especially Burgundy and Alsace) provided their models. However, the only legal place to get grapevines was California. When it came to Chardonnay, the choices were three late-ripening selections - Draper, Wente, and 108 - all selected for warmer climates than Oregon's. Though some fine wines were produced, autumn rainstorms frequently arrived before these selections were fully ripe. While working in Burgundy in 1974, David Adelsheim saw that Chardonnay there ripened at the same time as Pinot noir, not two-to-three weeks later as in Oregon. So, at his (and others') urging, Oregon State University imported a number of Chardonnay clones from Burgundy during the years 1977 to 1988, and starting in 1989, these "Dijon" clones were released to growers. Today, the resulting wines have entirely different flavors than those of the old California selections; they are, in fact, much more like those of white Burgundy.

GROWING SEASON Summer-like weather appeared in late January in the northern Willamette Valley, pushing activities in the vineyard over two months ahead of schedule, with bud break occurring quite early, on March 15th. Then, in late March, one of the driest winters on record turned in to one of the wettest springs. Cloudy, rainy and cool weather at bloom time, June 8-12, was the cause of reduced crop levels (approx. 75% of normal) for the vintage. These rains, however, saturated the soil and kept vines from any sign of water stress until late August. Cool temperatures throughout September and October and light rains beginning at the very end of September, meant slow-ripening fruit and challenging decisions about when to pick. With good vineyard management to control the effects of the moisture, we were able to avoid rot or mildew issues, allowing fruit to hang in wait of optimal fruit ripeness and flavor profiles. Cooler temperatures translated into sound acidity and ideal flavor development in the wines.

VINEYARDS The 2005 Caitlin's Reserve consists of early-ripening "Dijon" clones planted on Stoller Vineyard (Clone 76). The deep, basaltic-origin, clay-loam soils of this vineyard are ideally suited to ripening these French clones of Chardonnay. The vineyard is situated at the south edge of the Red Hills of Dundee, one of the north Willamette Valley's most respected viticultural areas. Ranging in elevation from 300-600 feet above sea level, the vineyard's southeast-to-southwest exposure has reminded vintners from Burgundy of the hill of Corton.

WINEMAKING To produce this wine, we used the same 'barrel-centric' winemaking that has always been employed by the top Burgundy producers. Following a gentle, whole-cluster pressing to separate the juice from the skins as quickly as possible, the juice was transferred to small French oak barrels, of which 25% were new. After undergoing primary and malolactic fermentations, the lees of the wines were stirred every two weeks to add complexity. Sur lie aging for 10 months allowed the Chardonnay and oak flavors to meld, and for the oak tannins to elongate, thereby softening and rounding the wine. After being racked from barrel, the wine was bottled in late August, 2006.

THE WINE The 2005 bottling offers a captivating blend of zesty sweet lemons, hazelnuts and spice (nutmeg, among others) on the nose, with the French oak almost subliminal in the background. On the palate, the wine shows artful layers of citrus, nutmeats and minerals, beautifully balanced acidity, and a long, polished finish. This Chardonnay pulls off the difficult feat of feeling both rich and lively, broad, yet focused. It will pair beautifully with poached salmon, lobster, smoked meats and cheeses...spicy dishes as well.

THE LABEL The label portrait by Ginny Adelsheim is of Caitlin Wells, the daughter of Ginny's life-long friend, Connie Kiener. Both Connie and Caitlin lived at our Quarter Mile Lane vineyard house in the late 1970's. At age five, Caitlin was making change at our open-house tastings. She's now a pediatric nurse in Portland with a daughter of her own.

THE QUANTITY Production of this wine was 2,916 bottles (750ml), released in cartons of six.

