



## 2006 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) were their models. However, the only legal place to acquire grapevines was California, and when it came to Chardonnay, the choices available were three late-ripening selections - Draper, Wente and 108 - all selected for climates much warmer than Oregon's. Though there were occasional examples of lovely Oregon Chardonnay, autumn rainstorms often arrived before the grapes were fully ripe. In 1974, David Adelsheim, while working a harvest in Burgundy, noted that Chardonnay there ripened earlier in relation to Pinot noir than it did in Oregon, and so at his (and other's) urging, Oregon State University imported a number of Chardonnay clones from Burgundy in the years 1977 to 1988. Starting in 1989, these "Dijon" clones were released to growers, and as those vines matured, we've found that the resulting wines are much different than what Oregon could formerly produce, much more in the direction of white Burgundy.

**GROWING SEASON** Although storms carrying a lot of rain swept through Oregon in mid-January, slowing up pruning work, by the time spring rolled around the 2006 growing season had caught up to what we assume to be "normal" timing in this day and age. Bud break occurred in the third week of March, and bloom about the second week of June. Perfect bloom weather resulted in too many clusters, each with too many berries. Thus, we spent significant time doing "green harvest" passes to pare back the crop to what our climate could actually ripen. Harvest was accomplished in near perfect weather, warm enough that everything ripened smoothly, yet not all at once, with cool mornings for picking, and very little rain. This was the first Chardonnay in the door for us, picked on September 30.

**VINEYARDS** All the grapes for this vintage come from Stoller Vineyards, specifically from the Burgundian clone 76. Stoller Vineyards is situated at the south edge of the Dundee Hills on deep, basaltic-origin, clay-loam soils which have proven to be suited for ripening the French clones of Chardonnay. Ranging in elevation from 300 to 600 feet above sea level, this vineyard's southeast-to-southwest exposure and its general appearance have reminded vintners from all over the world (especially Burgundy) of the hill of Corton.

**WINEMAKING** The techniques we use to produce this wine are, unsurprisingly, quite similar to those employed by the finest vintners in Burgundy. After picking the grapes by hand, we used a gentle bladder press to press the whole clusters, thereby separating the juice from the skins as quickly as possible. The wine underwent both primary and malolactic fermentations in small French oak barrels (22% new), and over the next few months, winemaker Dave Paige had the lees stirred every two weeks to add complexity. Sur lie aging for ten months allowed the Chardonnay and oak flavors to meld, and for the tannins to elongate, thereby softening and rounding the wine. The first racking came at bottling time, in mid-August, when the final blend was assembled. It was bottled a few days later on August 20, 2007.

**THE WINE** This 2006 bottling shows lemons, figs and apricots - as well as spice and hazelnuts - on the nose, with the French oak almost subliminal in the background. On the palate, the wine shows artful layers of figs, Asian pears, apricots, apples, nutmeats and minerals. It almost seems lush, but is beautifully balanced by the acidity one gets in our Northern wine region, and features a long polished finish. In the end, it pulls off the difficult feat of feeling both rich and lively, broad yet focused. It will pair wonderfully with poached salmon, lobster, smoked meats, cheeses, and spicy dishes.

**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 back 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 and son of her own.

**PRODUCTION** There were 2,454 bottles (750 ml) of the 2006 Caitlin's Reserve Chardonnay produced, which are packaged in cartons of six.

