



2011 CHARDONNAY

Carneros



varietal composition: 100% CHARDONNAY

appellation: CARNEROS

harvest: OCTOBER 2011

technical data: ALC. 13.8% BY VOL; RS: 0.2%; TA: 6.3 G/L; PH: 3.55

cooperage: 50% AGED 6 MONTHS IN FRENCH OAK BARRELS (30% NEW);
50% AGED IN STAINLESS STEEL

THE 2011 VINTAGE

The 2011 vintage started off with a relatively dry winter. Early spring was wet and cold and it delayed bud break. The overcast weather was persistent throughout the spring and cool temperatures, rain, and even hail during the bloom caused low yields. The summer was also cool and the veraison did not occur until August. Our harvest began almost 4 weeks later than average and a slow pace until the first week of October when we experienced the first rain which changed the dynamics. The speed to bring in all our Pinot Noir and Chardonnay increased to mitigate the risk of botrytis and other molds. 2011 was by far a challenging vintage. Nevertheless, an intensive, exhaustive care from vineyards to winemaking enabled us to produce stunning wines with remarkable delicacy.

ABOUT THE VINEYARD

Our Chardonnay vineyards span the entire cool climate Carneros region. Temperatures are moderated by the adjoining San Pablo Bay, cool afternoon breezes, and persistent morning fog. As the hot air above California's Central Valley rises, it is replaced by cool air from the Pacific Ocean. The sun burns off this fog late in the morning which causes the temperature to immediately jump 15 degrees. This climate yields grapes that have both enough cool hang time and sunshine to develop great natural acidity and deep fruit flavor. The blend consists of 20% of Estate grown Chardonnay and 80% came from several neighboring growers who have farmed grapes for Artesa for many years.

WINEMAKING

After the grapes were hand harvested, winemaker Mark Beringer used whole-cluster pressing with the majority of the grapes (a technique which bypasses crushing) using a slow "champagne" cycle that gently pushes the must rendering clean juice but few solids. 30% of the juice was fermented in new French oak barrels (the remainder was fermented in seasoned barrels and stainless steel), imparting richness and viscosity without overwhelming the wine. Likewise, Beringer allowed just 50% of the wine to undergo malolactic fermentation, rounding out the edges with a hint of butter that never goes over the top. Finally, a portion of the wine was lees stirred twice a week for five months, bringing added texture and richness to the mouthfeel. The wine was bottled after six months of aging.

TASTING NOTES

"The Carneros Chardonnay is first and foremost about aromatics, and the techniques I use are designed to retain the signature Carneros aromas of lemon-citrus and white blossom while accentuating the minerality and vivid, fresh fruit flavors of citrus and stone fruits in the wine. Partial barrel fermentation, malolactic and lees stirring create layers affect, imparting hints of cedar and honey and wrapping the flavors in a rich, generously-textured mouthfeel." — Mark Beringer