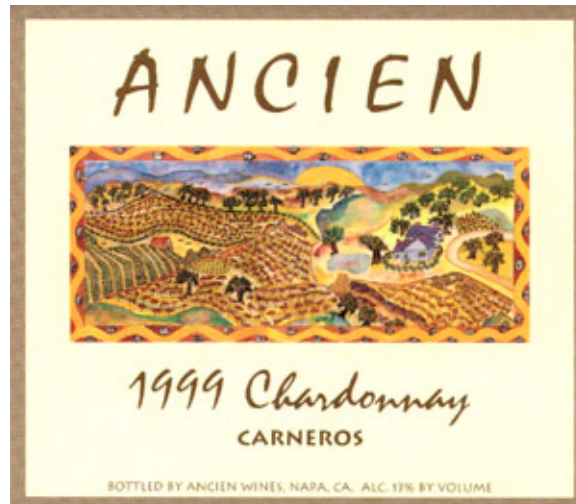


Ancien Wines

1999 Carneros Chardonnay



ABOUT THE VINEYARD...

Beginning in 1999, we shifted our sourcing to a 28 year old block of old Wente Chardonnay from the Ferguson vineyard (formerly a Buena Vista leased property). The rocky soils and brisk winds conspire to make this an austere site with low vigor and very exposed vines. The resultant wines are more intensely mineral with broad texture and deep rich flavors. We will continue to blend this with a small amount of old clone Chardonnay from Sangiacomo's Vella block.

These "old Wente" Chardonnay cuttings are reputed to have been purchased by the Wente nursery from Paul Mason who imported them from Burgundy in the early 1940s from Louis Latour's Corton Charlemagne vineyard. We think of these selections as "heirloom" clones as they produce wines of exceptional concentration, breadth, complexity and longevity. There is less and less of this material available. As the old vineyards are replanted, few are anxious to replant to old Wente as the crop level is very low.

ABOUT THE VINTAGE...

One of the coolest years on record. The Carneros harvest was several weeks later than the harvest in Burgundy! After a bleak and frigid September that had all of us thinking we were making wine in Iceland, a heat spell provided just the push to bring ripeness to ideal levels. We saw tremendous flavors with good acidity and structure. The 1999 vintage possesses more opulence than the rather tight and austere 1998 vintage and better structure than the 1997 vintage.

ABOUT THE WINE...

We gently pressed the grapes as whole clusters, settled and fermented entirely in French Oak, of which 45% was new. We used a variety of yeasts, including native yeast, and three Burgundian coopers chosen for their synergism and support of the fruit. Fermentation proceeded slowly at cool temperature, averaging 56°F. The wine was aged on its lees, which were stirred weekly through May. The wine was not racked until bottling, at which time it was moved with inert Argon gas. Malolactic fermentation was 30% complete.

Wine analysis: Alc. 13.7%, pH 3.42, ta 6.2 g/l. 600 cases produced.

TASTING NOTES ...

Freesia, ginger spice, green apple, and lemon custard aromas are echoed in the palate. Layers of baked apple, pear, and melon are framed by a flinty/mineral finish with creamy vanillin providing support to the focused finish with nice crisp acidity. Viscous in texture and opulent in its intensity, this wine will continue to develop in bottle over the next several years.

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