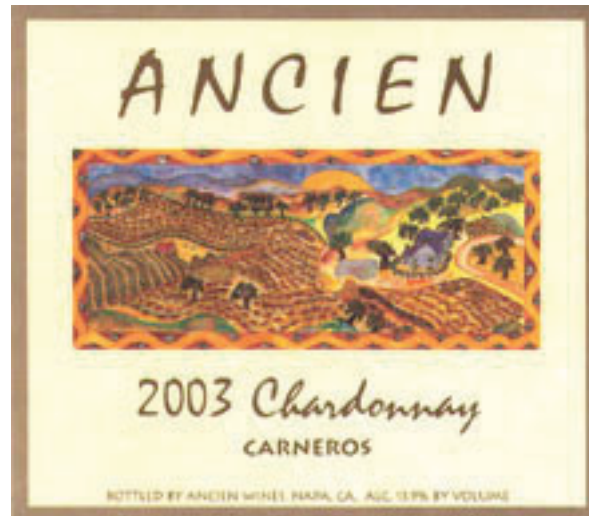


Ancien Wines

2003 Carneros Chardonnay



ABOUT THE VINEYARD...

The 2003 Chardonnay is the culmination of plant selection we have been working on since 1997. It is made up of two vineyards planted specifically for us from vine cuttings we had selected. The vineyards, the Toyon Farm on the Napa side of Carneros, and the Vella Ranch on the Sonoma side. The vineyards were planted to "Old Wente" and "Robert Young" selections. (These low-cropping "old Wente" Chardonnay cuttings are reputed to have been purchased by the Wente nursery from Paul Masson who imported them from Burgundy in the early 1940s - from Louis Latour's Corton Charlemagne vineyard.)

ABOUT THE VINTAGE...

The 2003 vintage is the third in an exceptional string of vintages on the West Coast. The fruit ripened slowly through the cool summer with a bit of heat down the stretch bringing the fruit to ripeness. We were able to pick the grapes exactly when we wanted with ideal sugar and above average acid levels. As a result, this vintage has seen a complete malolactic fermentation.

ABOUT THE WINE...

We aspire to guide our Chardonnay toward a layered, complex, and food friendly style that develops gracefully in the bottle. For us, the key word is balance. Additionally, we aim to highlight the unique characteristics of the vineyards and clonal selections we work with - producing a Carneros Chardonnay with enticing minerality, structure and vivaciousness.

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 55°F. The wine was aged on its yeast lees, which were stirred weekly through May. The wine was not racked cleanly at bottling using inert Argon gas instead of pumping. With the nice natural acidity, we were able to complete malolactic fermentation allowing the wine to be bottled unfiltered. Wine analysis: Alc. 14 %, pH 3.39, ta 6.1 g/l. 700 cases produced.

TASTING NOTES...

The wine is densely flavored, rich, and layered with broad forward fruit, freesia, ripe apple, and lemon cream aromas layered above creamy yeast notes, cocoa and vanillin. Exceptional richness and fruit intensity with mineral notes framing the opulently textured palate. The finish is long and focused with nicely balanced acidity. This is a more forward vintage than 2002 from the outset, with accentuated mineral and tropical fruits upon release. The wine will continue to develop beautifully in bottle over the next 3 - 4 years.