

# ABEJA



2003 CHARDONNAY

*Washington State*

harvest dates: September 12–October 16

varietal composition: 100% Chardonnay

fermentation: 100% Barrel fermented; Two yeast strains; 100%ml

barrel aging: 10 Months

oak composition:

100% French, four coopers, tight grained, medium toast; 50% new, 50% 1-year

alcohol: 13.5%

cases produced : 654

bottling date: August 18, 2004; release date: December 1, 2004

optimum time for consumption: Through 2008/2009

If you enjoyed our first release of Chardonnay for its combination of pretty elegance and richness, then this vintage will again please you. Fruit from the same three great sites -- Celilo, Kestrel View Estates, and Conner Lee -- were blended here.

The vintage of 2003 was the warmest that I have been involved with, reaching 3,000 growing degree days in some of our viticultural areas. This created some challenges in making our style of Chardonnay. For example, Celilo Vineyard, which is best known for its natural acidity, reached flavor maturity 15 days earlier in 2003 than in 2002. However, cool nighttime temperatures in September balanced the warm growing season, and we were able to achieve flavor maturity without elevated sugar levels.

All hand-picked, the fruit was delicately whole-cluster pressed. After settling, the juice was put down to barrel in 100% tight-grained French oak and inoculated with one of two strains of yeast. After fermentation, each barrel was lees-stirred weekly for as long as six months. Secondary fermentation with neutral strains of malolactic bacteria gives a richness on the palate while maintaining the pretty, delicate aromas on the nose.

The warmer vintage made for a slightly richer wine than the 2002, with a hint more density. It generously offers up aromas of white peach and other delicate stone fruits. These are followed by touches of floral notes and wood spice that are paralleled by a classic minerality. The mouth has richness and weight, nicely integrated with the influence of wood and the fruit flavors of the varietal, which are all balanced by a nice acidity.

It is always our goal to grow our grapes and make our wines to go with food. I love halibut with Chardonnay, and this particular vintage lends itself to rich exotic fruits like mango. Try a mango salsa as a side. Although harder to find, fried razor clams are a delicious complement. And we are having fun revisiting an old favorite-fondue. In Tom Douglas' new book *Tom's Big Dinners*, the "Goat Cheese Fondue with Apples" is delicious!

On my Cabernet note, I confessed to over-doing my passion for music, so with that out of the way, I really have enjoyed Tony Rice's "Me and My Guitar." Like the wine, this song makes me smile. This Chardonnay can also handle some pretty adventurous music, which made me dig back into the archives. I recommend Thin Lizzy's "Jailbreak" and "Cowboy Song" or Iggy Pop's "Candy." John Abbott – *Winemaker*