

STEMMLER

2011 CARNEROS CHARDONNAY

Stemmler Chardonnay is sourced from our Estate vineyard and neighboring vineyards in the cool, foggy Carneros area just north of San Pablo Bay. A mix of heritage and Dijon clones fermented in a combination stainless steel and oak, its brightness and moderate alcohol level makes it an ideal pairing with a wide range of cuisines.

The 2011 Stemmler Carneros Chardonnay is bright gold in color. Aromas of apple, Meyer lemon, mandarin orange, and ginger start from the bottle as the cork is popped. The palate shows more apple, joined by tropical, floral, and spice elements. Medium bodied with intense fruit, the finish lingers with flavors of key lime and baked apple.



FRUIT: 100% Carneros Chardonnay, Wente and Dijon 76 clones

HARVEST DATE: October 13 and 14, 2011

BOTTLING DATE: August 14, 2012

PRODUCTION: 465 cases

ALCOHOL: 13.6%

PH: 3.53

TA: 6.5

BARREL PROGRAM: 10% new French oak, 30% neutral oak, 60% stainless steel

FERMENTATION DETAILS:

Our chardonnay was picked in mid-October, with fairly low sugar after the cool season, but plenty of phenolic ripeness. It was whole-cluster pressed and allowed to settle overnight in tank, before being transferred off of the heavy lees to a combination of new and neutral French oak, with another portion going to stainless steel tank for fermentation. The juice was fermented cold, with some barrels being allowed to ferment spontaneously, and others inoculated with Montrachet yeast. Upon completion of primary fermentation, malolactic was arrested, maintaining fresh acidity. Lees were stirred every two weeks for the first 4 months of ageing, before being allowed to settle. Before bottling the barrels and tank were racked off of their lees and combined, before being bottled in August, 2012.

WEATHER ATTRIBUTES

There is no doubt that 2011 was an unusual year in California weather-wise, with cool temperatures and lots of precipitation being the key factors. After a warm, sunny start to the year, temperatures dropped steadily, with daytime highs rarely breaking 80F and plenty of rain all the way through the end of June. Budbreak occurred about three weeks later than usual, thanks to the cold weather, and flowering was somewhat disrupted by the rain, resulting in a crop size 10-30% lower than average depending on the block.

Once the rain stopped, temperatures remained below normal throughout the summer, further slowing the ripening process. In some ways this was a good thing, as it allowed the fruit to ripen slowly, developing flavor without a huge jump in sugar levels. Everyone kept saying that this could lead to an exceptional harvest, barring rain in early October. As it turned out, the rain decided not to wait until October, with a massive storm dropping over an inch of rain on September 30 and October 1.

With sugars low and ripeness not quite where we wanted it, we decided to hang the majority of our Estate fruit through the rain. Thanks to the steady winds consistently streaming off of the the San Pablo Bay, the fruit dried out well after the rain, and some warmer weather got things going again in the vineyard. A second, smaller rainstorm hit the following week, and with the warmer weather the potential for mold to develop dictated that it was time to pick the fruit. While not as ripe as we would see in a typical vintage, the fruit showed beautiful red-fruit flavors and wonderful acidity. 2011 is probably not the kind of vintage we would like to see every year, but it was educational to encounter the weather problems that vintners in Burgundy and Oregon see frequently, and the resulting wines show remarkable elegance and finesse.

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