



2005 HANZELL VINEYARDS CHARDONNAY
AMBASSADOR'S 1953 VINEYARD

VINTAGE AND WINEMAKING NOTES

Ambassador Zellerbach planted the first two acres of Chardonnay at Hanzell Vineyards in 1953. These vines would become the mother block for the estate, providing plant material from which most of the Chardonnay vines on the property originated. It is a hallowed vineyard, perhaps the oldest Chardonnay vineyard in California bottled as a single vineyard source in deference to the great history of its origins.

Referring to the family that introduced Chardonnay vines to California in 1912, the particular cuttings to which the *Ambassador's 1953 Vineyard* was grafted are known as the Old Wente clone. It was from Fred and Eleanor McCrea's 1947 planting of Old Wente at Stony Hill that Zellerbach acquired the cuttings to establish Hanzell Vineyards. Subsequent cuttings from Hanzell have propagated now-famous vineyard blocks in California such as Rochioli and Hirsch. It is a remarkable cultivar of Chardonnay, distinguished by a tendency to produce berries without seeds, that remain very small and retain natural acidity along with compelling flavors.

Not every vintage earns the *Ambassador's 1953 Vineyard* mantle, but in 2005 the climate conspired with the site to achieve greatness. In a vintage that was remarkable for rains persisting even into June, a vintage that provided Northern California with more than an abundant crop, the constitution of these vines dramatically and naturally limited production. Particularly remarkable with these grapes in 2005 was their small size. Many no larger than an eraser on a number two pencil, their tremendous flavor belied their smallness. It was apparent in the days leading up to harvest that we were in the presence of something amazing. It was as perfect a Chardonnay harvest as one could find in any vintage and we were able to press enough juice to fill nine barrels. Of these nine, we chose four to blend for this bottling; two new and two neutral French oak barrels.

The two new barrels were allowed to complete malo-lactic fermentation while the other half fermented in tank where malo-lactic was discouraged. The wines could not have been more dramatically different as we tasted them during *élevage*. Wine held in the new barrels expressed robust flavors of toasted marshmallow, tuberose, and marmalade while the neutral oak barrels matured a wine with an elegance and restraint both mineral and citric. Married in the blend, the opposing flavors ceased their quarrel and assumed complimentary roles. Balance emerged during two years of bottle aging and sustains both the hedonist's palate for opulence and the intellectuals' inquiry.

As with many great Hanzell vintages, the 2005 *Ambassador's 1953 Vineyard Chardonnay* will mature in a minimum of seven years. With the continued winemaking traditions of Bob Session's three decades of work at Hanzell Vineyards, there is every reason to believe that this wine will become truly extraordinary by 2025.

1,116 bottles produced.

Michael Terrien, Winemaker