

# Hanzell

## THE ESTATE VINEYARD

Hanzell Vineyards' forty-two acres of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are planted on the slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains, just north of the Sonoma Plaza. The original planting, the Ambassador's 1953 Vineyard, continues to produce to this day and is now the oldest Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyard in California. The Hanzell clone Pinot Noir and Chardonnay on this historic vineyard are regarded as important heritage clones of California and the budwood has been propagated to establish other vineyards throughout California and Oregon.

### **Hanzell Clone Chardonnay**

- Hanzell Vineyard's Chardonnay vines came from Wente clone cuttings of Fred McCrea's vineyard at Stony Hill. This shy-bearing selection is notable for *millerendage*, locally known as "hens and chicks", in which a cluster of grapes contains a few normal-size berries but is mostly populated by numerous small and seedless berries. The consistent small berry size of the Hanzell clone is extraordinary in that the phenomenon is more exaggerated than in the dwindling other "Old Wente" plantings in the California. It is the defining characteristic of Hanzell's Chardonnay and confers distinction on our wines.

### **Hanzell Clone Pinot Noir**

- Paul Masson imported cuttings from Burgundy in the late 1800s that are the known forebears to the Mt. Eden selection (Martin Ray) which receives much credit as a heritage selection of Pinot Noir in the New World. The subsequent generations of the lineage are represented by Hoffman Mountain, Joseph Swan, Rochioli, Hirsch and on down. We believe that the provenance of the Hanzell clone was originally from Paul Masson also, and that at some point the clone was planted at To Kalon Vineyard in Napa Valley when Ivan Schoch acquired the budwood for To Kalon's owner, Martin Stelling. Ivan Schoch was Hanzell's vineyard manager when Ambassador Zellerbach planted Hanzell in 1953. It was Schoch who introduced the Mt. Eden budwood from To Kalon cuttings to Hanzell Vineyards.
- The Hanzell clone is characterized by a high incidence of *millerendage*, in which pollination fails and the grapes have no seeds. One ramification of a seedless grape is the restriction on the size to which the grape can grow. It is quite common on a cluster of Hanzell clone Pinot Noir to find the majority of grapes are less than the size of peas. Size matters with red grapes, as the skin, representing the surface area, is the main source of pigment, tannin and flavor. Smaller berries have a higher surface area to volume ratio and thus a proportionately greater reservoir of extractable compounds. The resulting wines are darker, more tannic, and intensely flavored.

## **Red Hills Series Soil**

Hanzell Vineyards is located on a very small island of Red Hill Series soil surrounded by virtually un-plantable gray soils composed of archaic volcanic ash. The Red Hill Series soil contains only the most marginal organic material and has limited water-holding capacity due to its relatively recent volcanic origin. These are the characteristics that at once make it possible to sustain vines in a *low-to-no* irrigation environment yet restrict growth to achieve natural vine balance for high quality wine-grape production. Ambassador Zellerbach considered the fact that Burgundy achieves Grand Cru quality predominantly on its mid-slopes and chose the site of Hanzell by this principle. But it is the choice of planting only on the Red Hill Series soil that truly differentiates Hanzell from the surrounding geology and distinguishes the wines.

## **Farming Philosophy**

Today Hanzell's approach to farming is driven by the mutually compatible demands of grape quality and sustainability. For more than 50 years the earth under Hanzell Vineyards has produced extraordinary fruit. To achieve this quality for so many years and to continue for decades to come, it is necessary to consider the implications of all our viticultural practices. The land is redeemed through soil-building practices of annually sowing cover-crop, composting, and prohibiting the use of insecticides. We consider ourselves a member of the local and global community and take very seriously our responsibility to the environment. It is with great pleasure that we see salmon spawning in the Agua Caliente creek, the first tributary in our watershed.

Our farming philosophy is dictated by the requirement that quality grapes must be attended to intimately by good people. Long-term employees, notably 30-year veteran Vineyard Manager José Ramos, acquire an understanding of the conditions specific to a piece of ground and see the relationship between vine and earth played out slowly over many vintages. To have such a resource as Mr. Ramos is invaluable.

The critical similarity between all great attentive farmers, whether they practice organic, biodynamic, or even conventional farming, is thoughtfulness. All the viticultural inputs in a vineyard must be considered, and the ramifications weighed against the short term benefits. To eliminate herbicides and pesticides is a desirable goal that is more readily accomplished in growing wine grapes than with many other commercial crops. Hanzell Vineyards recognizes the responsibility we all share to promote the health of the environment and farms in observance of this mandate.