

Hanzell

2007 HANZELL VINEYARDS CHARDONNAY

Enticing aromas of citrus and white flowers are the initial notes, but with time the wine unfolds to offer marzipan, pear, and toasted almond. A rich vanilla-honey scent gives an impression of sweetness to the overall aromatic profile. In the mouth, the inherent richness builds over time with classic Hanzell flavors of lemon, chamomile and clean mineral emanating from a tautly wound core structure which hints at what will develop with further aging.

VINTAGE AND WINEMAKING NOTES

A dry, cool spring started the 2007 growing season with an even bud-break throughout the vineyard. Very mild weather persisted through May and June when temperatures hit 100 degrees four days in a row in early July. The remainder of July and August was marked by warm, sunny days followed by very cool nights and foggy mornings—perfect for flavor development without excessive sugar accumulation. However, the fog was so thick at times that the vines looked as if they had been rained upon necessitating diligence in the vineyard to make sure mildew and botrytis were under control.

Harvest commenced on August 21st with the Robert Young and Dijon 76 clones in the Chardonnay C98 Block in the Zellerbach Vineyard. Early by our standards, however, ripeness by physical appearance and flavor were high even at a lower degree brix. The seeds were so deeply brown they appeared black and the skins gold throughout, not emerald. By August 31st the only Chardonnay we had left to pick was the de Brye Vineyard and the old vines in the Day Vineyard. We resumed picking on September 4th and finished on the 8th.

The winemaking traditions that Bob Sessions had guided over his 30 year tenure were upheld. One-third of the wine was fermented and aged in new Sirugue French oak barrels where malo-lactic fermentation was encouraged. The balance of the wine was fermented cool, in stainless steel tanks where malo-lactic was discouraged. After six months, the tank-fermented portion was put into two and three year old barrels and remained there for 11 months before blending and bottling.

The extreme quality of this vintage was quite apparent as we tasted through barrels in early summer. When it came time to put the blend together, our tasting panel was assembled which includes nearly forty years of Hanzell winemaking experience: Kim Giles (1969-1971), Bob Sessions (1973-2001) and Michael Terrien (2005-2008). Also on the panel, and with no less a voice, are Jean Arnold Sessions, Ben Sessions and our Assistant Winemaker, Lynda Hanson. One might think, and in all honesty I thought, that putting a blend of Chardonnay barrel lots together when starting with such outstanding wine would be a fairly straight forward affair. However, there was no shortage of opinions, dissensions, and encouragement. The intensity and focus to produce Grand Cru quality was truly humbling and inspiring. But, at the end of each tasting Kim, Bob, Michael and Jean would all say with a knowing grin, “McNeill, it’s your decision”—no pressure there. After seven separate panel tastings the blend was finally set; only 69% of the vintage was selected for the estate bottling. I am grateful that in the end, we were all in alignment that my decision on the final blend upheld our pursuit to capture the purest expression of our vineyards in the tradition and style that has become known as Hanzell.

— Michael McNeill, Winemaker

TECHNICAL DETAILS

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- 2,777 CASES BOTTLED IN APRIL, 2009
 - 38% BARREL-FERMENTED
 - 18 MONTH ÉLEVAGE IN 1/3 NEW SIRUGUE BARRELS