

Vineyard Production:
95 tons from 54 acres
Selection: 30%

94 Monte Bello, bottled May 96

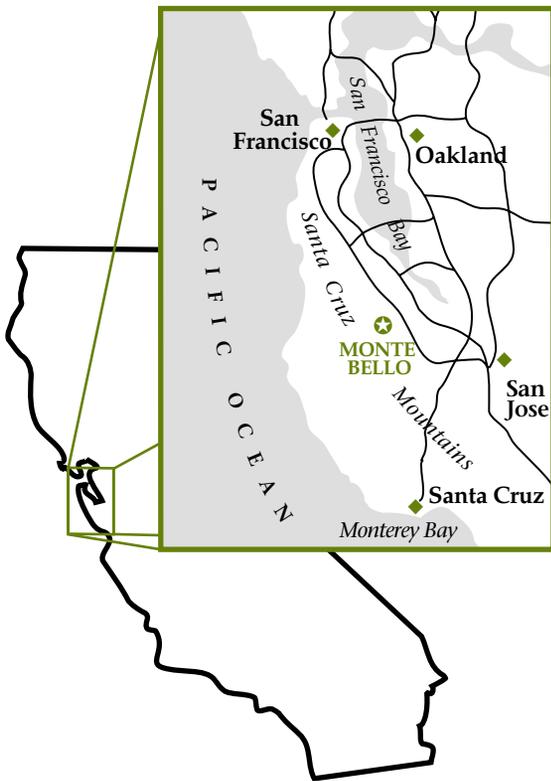
The '94 vintage followed the pattern of the last three years: spring rains and a late start to the growing season. Though the set was not heavy, we thinned rigorously to help ensure full maturity by harvest. Again, cool nights held acids high as the grapes ripened. We harvested from October 18 to 28—late, but fairly typical of our cool region. A light egg white fining and seventeen months in new, air-dried oak have softened the tannins beautifully. The merlot has enhanced fullness, the petit verdot, structure and spice. Both together, with the franc, add complexity. Though approachable as a young wine, this lovely vintage will be at its best with five to fifteen years of bottle age. PD (3/96)

RIDGE 1994

CALIFORNIA

MONTE BELLO®

73% CABERNET, 15% MERLOT, 9% PETIT VERDOT, 3% FRANC SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS ALCOHOL 12.7% BY VOLUME
GROWN, PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY RIDGE VINEYARDS BW 4488
17100 MONTE BELLO RD, BOX 1810, CUPERTINO, CALIFORNIA 95015



A cool spring and welcome rains delayed fruit formation even beyond 1993's late set. We thinned moderately just after set and again—rigorously—when the grapes turned color in late August. For the second consecutive year, warm days and cool nights contributed to very firm acidity. The merlot was harvested on October 1, but cool weather slowed ripening in the cabernet and petit verdot. On October 18, temperatures rose into the eighties and remained high. The twenty separate, small blocks were harvested as they ripened over the next ten days. Within twelve hours of crush the color in the juice was the darkest we had seen in any Monte Bello to date. Twelve to thirty-six hours later natural yeasts started the fermentations. We pumped over twice daily—aerating the juice slightly as we drew it off into a tub and circulated it gently over the skins. At about sixteen days, our tastings showed tough tannins in half the fermentors. To avoid over-extraction, we called the full crew in on a Sunday, pressing four tanks that day and another four on Monday. Virtually all were pressed by the time the wines had spent eighteen days on the skins. Natural malolactics finished by mid-November; in early December we began assembling the finest of the twenty wines as the Monte Bello. This early assemblage, right after malolactic, gave us a very firm, tannic wine. We racked to barrel on January 12, 1995, using one hundred percent new, air-dried oak, all but a small portion of which was american. The remainder went to french oak, continuing our annual comparison of the two.

One particularly fine wine was held out of the December assemblage because it did not seem to improve the whole. It came from younger vines on Le Vasseur Terraces and the adjoining South Slope. We had aged it separately—without fining—thinking to make a good, tough, winery-only release. The following December, after the Monte Bello had spent a year in barrel, we noted that tannin levels had dropped significantly. To bring them back up (for aging potential), we again tried the wine from the Le Vasseur South Slope in the Monte Bello. All those tasting experienced a moment of pure elation, and clarity. We voted on the spot to include it. The tough tannins brought definition and liveliness to the full, rich flavors of the '94. Seven racks after pressing, we bottled in spring of '96. This fine vintage stands easily beside its predecessors in the exceptional decade of the nineties.

Location: Monte Bello Ridge, Santa Cruz Mountains, Santa Clara County.
Acreage: Cabernet Sauvignon - 48.5 acres
Merlot - 6.0 acres
Petit Verdot - 3.0 acres
Cabernet franc - 1.5 acres
Yield: 1 - 2 tons/acre
Soils: Decomposing Franciscan rock mixed with clay, laid over fractured limestone.
Climate: Cool, mountainous—between the Mediterranean and Maritime Zones.
Elevation: 2300' - 2600'
Exposure: Principally south/southeast