

# 2005 MONTE BELLO

## Wine & Spirits

97 points

(December 2008): "The vines at Ridge's Monte Bello estate vineyard, at altitudes from 1,300 to 2,660 feet above the Pacific, consistently produce one of the greatest cabernet sauvignons in California. In 2005, a cold, wet spring cut yields to one ton per acre, the lowest level in ten years. The summer and fall ripened that small crop into something extraordinary. That season highlighted the factors that distinguish this wine: the maturity of the cabernet sauvignon vines, some that date to 1949; the limestone subsoils that sustain the vines without irrigation; the native yeast fermentations and the skill of the blending team, which selected half of the production for this final blend (in addition to 70 percent cabernet sauvignon, it includes merlot, petit verdot and cabernet franc). It tastes like tiny berries, an authentic California wine, with the flavor of mountain-grown fruit very dark in color and not a lot of them. The tannins have the intensity of wild blueberries, a soft power that's friendly rather than austere. Its fresh, bright floral aspects combine seamlessly with the structure, pointing up the wine's youthful beauty. The moderate alcohol (13.4 percent) is just one more factor that predicts a long life ahead for this wine."

## CONNOISSEURS' GUIDE 93 points

(December 2008): "For more than three decades, Ridge Montebello Cabernets have generated their fair share of excitement in the market. In more years than not they challenge for top honors, and when the wine is good, as it is in this vintage, it is very good indeed. This bottling begins with deep and yet very mannerly aromas of cassis, pencil lead and violets and builds with complex, claret-like flavors that combine poise and richness. So finely fit as to be almost seamless, it has the balance and layering to invite a decade and more of cellaring."



Steep terraces at the Monte Bello Vineyard. Elevation: 2300 - 2600 feet.

**Source** Monte Bello Estate Vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Cabernet sauvignon, merlot, petit verdot, and franc—oldest vines planted 1949.

**Vintage** Perfect ripening weather in summer and fall followed a difficult spring. Late rains and cold winds cut yields to a ton an acre, lowest in ten years.

**Tasting Notes** Intense black fruit, licorice, sweet oak, mineral, and spice. Balanced and sensuous even as a young wine.

