

# RIDGE

VINEYARDS

## Monte Bello Tasting

\$20 for non-members, \$10 for members

\*available exclusively at the winery

### 2008 Chardonnay Jimsomare, \$32

*100% chardonnay*

The vines awoke to an early spring, as a warm February pushed growth ahead of schedule. Two consecutive years of below-average rainfall, and the absence of any late-spring storms, caused water stress in the upper-elevation parcel. Next morning, the juice was aerated by pump-over, then moved to american oak barrels for natural primary fermentation. In late summer, when assemblage usually takes place, we confirmed that its unique set of flavors called for a separate bottling. Sweet fruit and supple balance suggest that this appealing chardonnay will be most enjoyable through

### 2006 Monte Bello, \$145

*68% cabernet sauvignon, 20% merlot, 10% petit verdot, 2% cabernet franc*

Winter was wet and cold through April, but May's warm weather let the vines set a full crop. Summer was unusually warm; picking began on September 18, ahead of schedule. Though a cool October slowed ripening, all parcels were harvested within five weeks, and natural yeasts started the primary within three days. Balanced and elegant now, this exceptional vintage has the structure to carry it for twenty-five years or more.

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### 2007 Zinfandel Pagani Ranch, \$35

*92% zinfandel, 5% alicante bouschet, 3% petite sirah*

A warm, dry spring augured a good set, though lack of rain was a concern. Fortunately, the deep-rooted vines found water throughout a mild summer. Ripening was threatened as several fronts passed over Northern California in late September.

We picked on October 8; a serious storm struck the next day, but to our surprise the grapes had ripened perfectly. The fully crushed fruit fermented on its natural yeasts in eight small tanks. This opulent Pagani exemplifies the complexity that can be drawn from old field-blend vines.

### 2006 Zinfandel Lytton Estate\*, \$30

*84% zinfandel, 16% petite sirah*

Each year, after harvesting and fermenting the thirty-four blocks that make up the Lytton Estate vineyard, we blind taste the lots to determine which are most characteristic of the site. These wines are then assembled for the Lytton Springs (The less intense wines become part of our Three Valleys.) Occasionally, as in 2006, we hold out riper wines of excellent quality, because their inclusion would change the style of the Lytton Estate. More elegant than the 2003, the 2006 will benefit from two to three years of bottle age and be most enjoyable over the next five to seven.

### 2006 Zinfandel Caboose\*, \$30

*96% zinfandel, 4% petite sirah*      *49 barrels produced*

When Ed Nervo was growing up, the Northwestern Pacific had a whistle stop at the family winery; his lifelong love of railroads and farming intersected when he managed to pull an old caboose up the hill to the middle of the vineyard. This season, though delayed by a cold, wet spring, produced a good crop. Waiting to harvest, we sampled the vineyards repeatedly, finally picking late in September. Once malolactic was complete, the wine aged for fifteen months in air-dried american oak barrels. Twenty-five percent new oak lends exotic spice and accentuates sweetness.

### 2007 Cabernet Santa Cruz Mountains Estate, \$40

*58% cabernet sauvignon, 42% merlot*

An unusually early spring brought bud-break in February. Cold weather in late September and much of October delayed harvest, but sun and warmth returned at the end of October, ripening the grapes fully. When tannin proved difficult to extract, we changed our partial-whole-berry approach to full crush, for greater seed/juice contact. Frequent pump-overs during the natural primary continued until pressing. In February, we chose eighteen beautifully-balanced lots from the Monte Bello vineyard for the Santa Cruz Mountains Estate. This fine wine shows ripe mountain fruit, integrated barrel spice, and elegant structure.

