RIDGE
VINEYARDS

Monte Bello Tasting

($20 for Non-Members, $10 for Members)

2008 Chardonnay Santa Cruz Mountains Estate, $40

100% chardonnay

An unusually warm February prompted an early start to the growing season. Set finished by late April, but yielded less fruit than usual; a mild summer ripened the grapes for an early-September harvest. The whole clusters went directly to our gentle membrane press. Assemblage combined the most elegant and fruit-forward wines for this superb chardonnay. The wine's abundant fruit and refreshing acidity will be most enjoyable over the next five to six years.

2008 Buchignani Carignane, $28 (ATP Selection)

100% Old Vine Carignane

As in 2007, the crop was small, moderate summer weather slowed ripening, allowing the fruit to develop full flavor. Each of the five parcels was picked just after Labor Day, and fermented on its naturally occurring yeasts. Pressed at dryness, the wine completed a natural malolactic fermentation and was racked to air-dried American oak for twelve months of barrel aging. Enjoyable now, it will be at it's best over the next four to five years.

2006 Mazzoni Home Ranch, $28 (ATP Selection)

58% zinfandel, 40% carignane, 2% petit sirah

A cold spring on the north coast set back the growing season; a mild summer and cool autumn delayed harvest further. We confirmed ideal maturity on September 30, and harvested that day. A natural malolactic was complete by late October. In our fourty-four year old history with zinfandel, we have found that only wines from very old vines can naturally achieve full flavor at such moderate ripeness.

2008 Geyserville, $35 (Z-list Selection)

72% zinfandel, 20% carignane, 6% petite sirah, 2% mataro

Two consecutive years of limited rainfall challenged the growing season, but because yields were low, the vines escaped serious water stress. Sampling began in mid-August, showing ripeness on track for a month-long September harvest. Zinfandel and carignane showed exceptional quality, and form the core of the blend. Natural secondary fermentation finished quickly, and we could rack to barrel a month ahead of schedule. Twenty percent new oak adds exotic spice.

2008 Zinfandel East Bench, $26 (Z-list Selection)

100% zinfandel

One of our few single-varietal vineyards, East Bench sits atop the ridge that separates Dry Creek and Alexander Valleys. Its red clay/loam soils are ideal for growing zinfandel. In 2008, set was complete by late May; in July, after veraison, we dropped twenty percent of the crop to ensure optimum flavor and intensity. The grapes were hand-harvested between August 26 and September 2, and fermented on their native yeasts. The 2008 East Bench is quintessential Dry Creek Valley, exhibiting the red fruit, pepper spice, and mineral flavors that have made the region famous.

2007 Monte Bello, $145

79% cabernet, 10% merlot, 9% petit verdot, 2% cabernet franc

A mild February brought early budbreak, and ideal conditions through spring allowed the vines to set a full crop. In late September, however, cold weather halted ripening. October was wet and wintry; then, on the twenty-third, temperatures soared into the high eighties. The grapes rebounded quickly, developing incredible intensity. In late January we blind tasted thirty-six lots, choosing seventeen for the first assemblage. In May, six more were included. Despite the unusual weather, this is classic Monte Bello-dark fruit, firm tannins, and lively acidity.