

Vineyard Production: 131 tons from 108 acres
Selection: 27%

RIDGE 2002

CALIFORNIA

MONTE BELLO®

2002 Monte Bello, bottled May 2004

After an unusually early start to 2001's growing season, 2002 settled back to normal. The merlot crop was reduced by May rains during set, but cabernet yields—making up for last year—were extravagant, and we thinned rigorously to ensure ripening. We harvested the thirty parcels as flavors developed, dividing them into thirty-six separate lots of three to six tons each. Color and tannin developed easily, so in order to prolong the natural-yeast fermentations, we radically reduced circulation of juice over the cap. Delaying the first assemblage until March allowed the wine to stabilize. We initially chose ten of the most intense lots for the Monte Bello, adding four more in May, at the second assemblage. Eighty-seven percent of the wine aged in new, air-dried american oak barrels; as our ongoing control, thirteen percent—an uncommonly large proportion—aged in new french oak. To moderate the firm tannins, we made numerous experimental fresh-egg-white finings, deciding only this month that the unfinned wine was more classically Monte Bello. Beautifully structured and balanced now, it will reach another level of complexity with six to eight years in bottle, and age fully over the next twenty. PD (1/04)

74% CABERNET SAUVIGNON,
18% MERLOT, 8% PETIT VERDOT

13.3% alcohol by volume

Tasting Notes

Color Opaque ruby

Nose Ripe black currant/black cherry. Coffee/ chocolate, mint. Mineral/flint/wet limestone. Vanilla, toasted oak.

Palate Rich berry, sweet cassis. Substantial yet integrated tannins, good acid/tannin balance. Opulent finish. Great depth.

History

The Monte Bello estate vineyard was planted, and the winery constructed, in 1886. A first vintage from the young vines followed in 1892. During Prohibition (1920-1933), the vineyard was not fully maintained; by the 1940s it was effectively abandoned. Eight acres of cabernet sauvignon were replanted in 1949. These were the source of the first Ridge Monte Bello (1962). Since then, the original vineyards have gradually been replanted.

Vintage

Harvest Dates 30 September - 22 October

Grapes Average brix 24.7°; average pH at crush 3.38.

Fermentation Gentle destemming, no crushing. (In thirty-six separately-fermenting lots, roughly half the berries remained unbroken.) Natural-yeast primary and secondary fermentations. Pressed at eight days on average.

Agging 87% new, air-dried american oak, 13% new french oak.

Time in Barrel Eighteen months

Vineyard

First RIDGE MONTE BELLO 1962

Location Monte Bello Ridge, in northern California's Santa Cruz Mountains, overlooking the San Francisco peninsula.

Elevation 1300 - 2660'.

Soils Decomposing Franciscan rock mixed with clay, laid over fractured limestone.

Vines Cabernet sauvignon planted 1949-1993, 66.4 acres.
merlot planted 1970-1997, 12.8 acres.
petit verdot planted 1970-1993, 2.2 acres.
cabernet franc planted 1972, 1.3 acres.

Training Head-trained. Cane pruned (on vertical trellis).

Irrigation Non-irrigated. (Exception: new vines receive drip irrigation until established.)

Yield 1 to 2.5 tons per acre

Growing Season

Rainfall 36.7 inches

Bloom June

Weather Frost in April (rare). Cold, rainy May. Fine summer.

