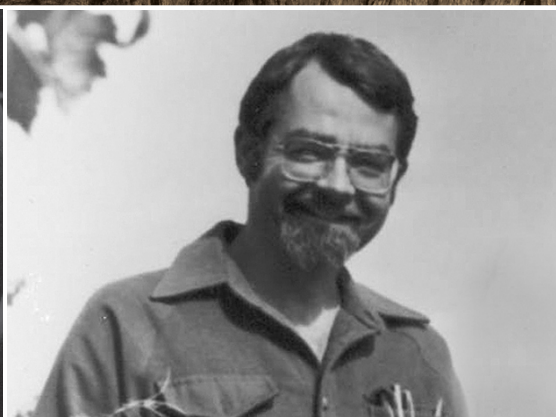
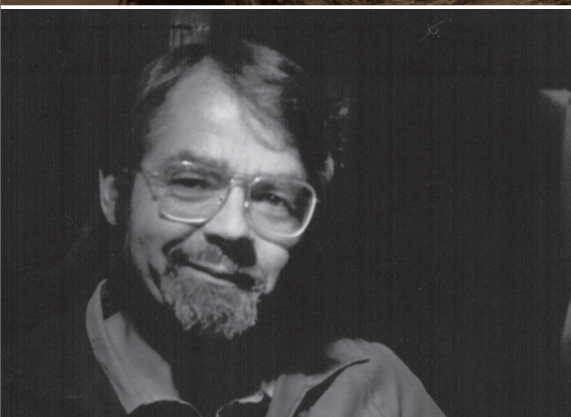


RIDGE VINEYARDS

Exceptional single-vineyard wines since 1962

Fall 2016



After 47 Years, Paul Draper Retires

80 years – It seems a most celebratory age to step back. We have two of the finest winemakers and one of the most exceptional vineyard directors, who have each been with me for more than twenty years. Though I have done all major tasting with Eric Baugher, John Olney and David Gates, the wines of the last ten years are theirs, not mine, so you already know the quality and style of the vintages to come.

I grew up on an eighty-acre farm west of Chicago. After attending the Choate School and receiving a degree in philosophy from Stanford University, I lived for two and a half years in northern Italy, putting in the military service still required by the draft. Fortunately after attending Monterey Language School I was assigned to work as a civilian in liaison in the Veneto. I went on to attend the University of Paris and traveled extensively in France. With my good friend, Fritz Maytag, I re-opened a historic bodega on the southern coast range of Chile. We made three vintages of old vine, non-irrigated cabernet from several single vineyards before returning to California in early 1969.

Dave Bennion, Charlie Rosen, and Hew Crane, the three scientists from Stanford Research Institute (SRI) who had reopened the old Monte Bello Winery as Ridge Vineyards in 1962 had heard me speak about Chile and our traditional methods. What I described fit with what they were doing and their idea that wine was something “real” and a perfect corrective to the “virtual” world that they were pioneering in their work at SRI. In offering me the job of winemaker they had me taste the '62 and '64 Monte Bellos made from cabernet replanted in the 1940's at Monte Bello. They had never made wine before and had simply picked the grapes on a Saturday, crushed them to a small fermentor adding no yeast and went back to their jobs. They had placed a grid to submerge the grapes and came back the next weekend to find them fermenting nicely. A week later the wine was dry and they pressed the grapes, adding back the press wine and a minimum of SO₂.

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Chardonnay, “Ridge’s little secret”

Ridge has made chardonnay since 1962, the year the winery was bonded. The first Ridge Chardonnay was produced from vines planted in the late 1940s on a south-facing slope at an elevation of 2,300’.

Although chardonnay is an important part of our heritage, it remains a small portion of our total production. For decades, Ridge never made more than ten barrels of chardonnay, and it was sold principally at the winery. Very recently, James Laube, a senior editor and columnist for Wine Spectator magazine, described our chardonnay as “. . . Ridge’s little secret, overlooked by many. In some vintages, the delightfully rich and stylish estate-grown Chardonnays could easily pass for grand cru white Burgundy.”

Today, with 20 acres under vine at Monte Bello, chardonnay still represents less than 5% of our total production, but we do have enough of it to offer beyond the cellar door. We produce two chardonnays: the Estate and the Monte Bello. The Estate is produced every vintage, and typically is medium-bodied, with rich tropical fruit tones, and immediately enjoyable on release. The Monte Bello Chardonnay, a blend of our very best barrel lots, is produced only in high-quality vintages and benefits from up to 15-20 years of aging.

For the Monte Bello Chardonnay, Ridge winemaker Eric Baugher carefully assesses each of the 12 lots of wine he makes from nine separate parcels of grapes planted in our estate vineyard, which range in elevation from 1,200 to 2,700 feet. He selects those that provide the strongest imprint of limestone, sub-soil minerals, acidity, and mountain fruit character, as well as the best texture, weight and structure.

Eric embraces traditional—or what British wine writer Jancis Robinson calls “pre-industrial”—winemaking techniques. The handpicked chardonnay grapes are pressed as whole clusters and fermented using native yeasts from the vineyard. This is followed by a full, natural, malolactic fermentation, which converts sharp malic acid to softer lactic acid, thus giving the wine a

rounder, creamier texture. Our chardonnay is unfiltered and bottled with the minimum amount of sulfur dioxide necessary to prevent oxidation or spoilage.

Our Monte Bello Chardonnay spends 18 months more time aging in barrel and bottle prior to its release than our Estate Chardonnay. The additional time allows it to develop even greater complexity. The 2013 Monte Bello Chardonnay, released this fall, boasts a brilliant, pale gold color; aromas and flavors of fresh apricot and pear, crème brûlée, dried fig and mineral; lively acidity; and a rich, yet elegant texture.

2013 was a drought year, but the modest winter rainfall we received was sufficient to sustain the vines. A warm, dry spring and mild summer resulted in even ripening and an early harvest of very small grapes packed with intense flavor and firm structure ensured another magnificent vintage of Monte Bello Chardonnay.

—David Amadia, President

• Antonio Galloni
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explore all things wine

95 Points

The 2013 Chardonnay Monte Bello is exceptional. Rich, layered and creamy, the 2013 exudes depth. Readers will have to wait at least a few years before the 2013 hits its stride, but all the elements are in the right place. Yellow orchard fruit, mint, sweet spices and flowers are all fused together in an exceptional, racy Chardonnay loaded with class and personality. Today, the 2013 is a total knock-out. The 2,000 case production for the Monte Bello Chardonnay is a record high for Ridge.

—Antonio Galloni, July 2016



Continued from page 1

The wine went through a full, natural secondary fermentation and what I tasted with them six years later were the finest, most complex California wines I had ever had, including the best known wines of the 40’s and 50’s. They had simply not gotten in the way. It was clear they had an exceptional site and I knew if I joined them I would have the chance to make some very fine wine.

My hope is that our focus on the preindustrial techniques that had made the finest wines of Europe from the early 19th century to the early 1960’s and in California from the 1890’s until 1920 and again in the late 30’s has been a contribution to the California wine industry. It certainly has led to great success for Ridge. We were the first of the small, fine California producers to sell a significant part of production on the East Coast of the United States as well as export wine to Europe in the early ‘70’s. We exported the 1971 Monte Bello to both the UK and France and today export to over 40 countries.

In the early 70’s the quality of the wines being made from the Monte Bello vineyard caught the attention of Stephen Spurrier who included the 1971 Monte Bello in the now famous Paris tasting of 1976. We might have been satisfied with producing a Monte Bello that could often match the best of Bordeaux, and given our more favorable climate, make more consistently fine wines.

From the mid ‘60’s on we had sought out old vine zinfandel that had the potential to produce wines of complexity and distinct character. We went on to pioneer zinfandel as fine wine. We were working with a grape that nowhere in the world was used to make fine wine so the match of site, varietal and the quality of the winemaking were essential.

I feel I am passing on our vineyards and estate to members of my own family. I have had a great life pursuing my craft, my calling, for fifty years—three in Chile and forty-seven at Ridge. Although I am retiring, I will continue in my role as Chairman of the Board. In this capacity I can fully support this long planned transition.

—Paul Draper, Chairman of the Board

Fall Releases

2013 Monte Bello

Tasting Notes: Opaque ruby color. Ripe mountain briar and cassis fruits; licorice, crushed limestone, sweet toasted oak, violets. Intense blackberry fruit on entry; cola, exotic oak spice. Well-defined full body, rich structure, firm acid, wet stone mineral. Long, intense finish.



2014 Lytton Springs

Tasting Notes: Deep purple color. Appealing aromas of black pepper, cassis, and licorice. Layered plum, blackberry fruit on the palate; medium/full-bodied, with silky tannins. Notes of chapparral and mocha on the finish.



2014 Pagani Ranch Zinfandel

Tasting Notes: Saturated ruby color. Boysenberry fruit, plum skin, toasted oak. Full entry, sweet bramble fruit, mineral earthiness. Layered, with dense full-bodied tannins, firm acid, lengthy finish.



2014 Ponzo Zinfandel

Tasting Notes: Vibrant fresh cherry, raspberry, and tropical nose. Medium-bodied on the palate, with elegant, well-integrated tannins. Lively acidity. Notes of mineral and vanilla leading into a nice, lingering finish.



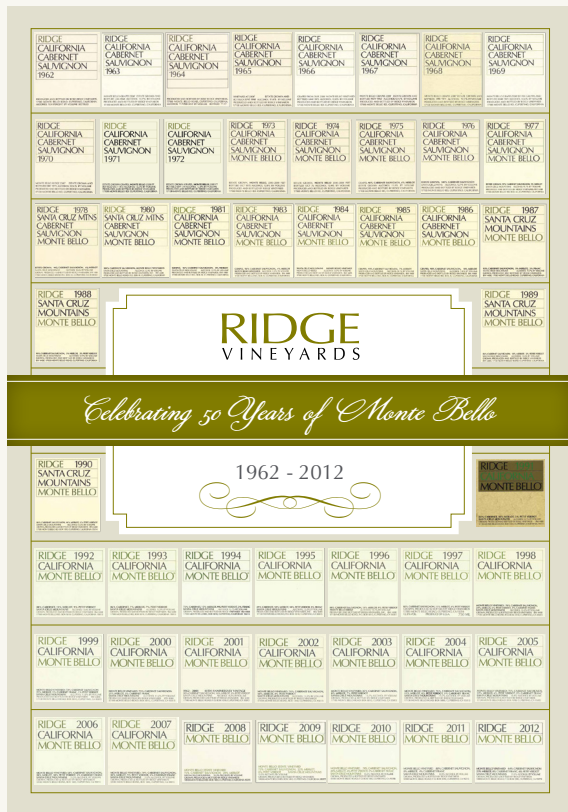
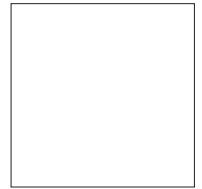
2014 Petite Sirah Lytton Estate

Tasting Notes: Opaque purple in color. Complex nose of blackberry, plum, tarragon, mint, and cocoa. Beautifully well-balanced. Full-bodied with chalky tannins. Rich and concentrated plum and mint on the finish.



RIDGE VINEYARDS

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In celebration of 50 years of Monte Bello we have created a limited-edition poster. Request yours now; while supplies last. wholesale@ridgewine.com

www.ridgewine.com/wholesale

Current Reviews

2013
Monte Bello
98+ Points



2014
Lytton Springs
94+ Points



2014
Geyserville
93 Points



2014
Petite Sirah
Estate
95 Points



July 2016

Antonio Galloni
presents

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Other Reviews

'14 Chardonnay Estate, 93 Points

'14 East Bench Zinfandel, 91 Points

'14 Pagan Ranch, 92 Points

'13 Cabernet Estate, 94 Points

'13 Merlot Estate, 92 Points