



2006 WILLAMETTE VALLEY CH

BACKGROUND In 1974, David Adelsheim worked the harvest in Burgundy, and while there realized that Oregon needed access to Chardonnay clones directly from Burgundy. Chardonnay in Burgundy ripened at the same time as Pinot noir; Chardonnay in Oregon (from several California selections) ripened two to three weeks later. David followed through by helping create a system for these clones to navigate through the red tape and mandatory quarantine. These so-called “Dijon” clones were released for planting in 1989. It turned out that they have fewer and smaller grape clusters, and thus are a better match for Oregon’s long, cool growing season. One thing surprised us – we’ve found we can produce excitingly rich Chardonnay with next to no oak influence at all. This is the third vintage of this wine which we have christened “CH” to distinguish it from all the overblown, so-much-oak-you-can’t-taste-the-grapes “Chardonnays”.

GROWING SEASON Although storms carrying a lot of rain swept through Oregon in mid-January – slowing up pruning work – by the time spring rolled around, the 2006 growing season had caught up to what we assume to be “normal” timing in this day and age. Bud break occurred in the third week of March, and bloom about the second week of June. Perfect bloom weather resulted in too many clusters, each with too many berries. Thus, we had to spend a significant amount of time in “green harvest” passes to pare back the crop to what our climate could actually ripen. Harvest was accomplished in near perfect weather, warm enough that everything ripened smoothly, yet not all at once, with cool mornings for picking, and very little rain. The first Chardonnay was picked on September 30, the last on October 9.

VINEYARDS Almost all the vineyards in this blend – Bryan Creek (32%), Boulder Ridge (17%), Quarter Mile Lane (16%) in the Chehalem Mountains; Stoller (13%), and Thistle (8%) in the Dundee Hills – are sited on basaltic-origin, clay loam soils. The exception is LOVE Vineyard (14%), up Calkins Lane from the winery on sedimentary soils. The basaltic-origin soils are very good at holding enough water to support the grapevines through our annual summer drought, whereas we have to work a little harder with the sedimentary soils to manage things (using clean cultivation reduce competition for moisture and in some years irrigation.) In the end, we were able to get intense fruit flavors – and not just a lot of sugar – from all these sources.

WINEMAKING As usual for our white wines, winemaker Dave Paige used gentle, whole-cluster pressing to separate the juice from the skins as quickly and as cleanly as possible for this Chardonnay. Almost all of the juice went into stainless steel tanks, though 9% went into very old barrels that imparted no flavor, but did add a bit of richness. A few of these barrels did also go through malolactic fermentation, so in the final blend, about 5% could be said to have been thusly affected. All were fermented very coolly, leaving as many of the fruit esters in the wine as possible.

THE WINE Easily the best yet of the first three vintages we’ve produced of this wine, it features incredibly focused white stone fruit and crisp apple flavors, minerals and spice, and a long slightly creamy finish. We’ve found it works well with hard Alpine cheeses (comté, fontina, cave-aged gruyère), and rich fish or poultry dishes.

THE LABEL This wine belongs to our series of relatively rare wines – officially (and lovingly) designated as “Wacky”, since they are not what one expects from a Willamette Valley winery. We use the same drawing by Ginny Adelsheim for all of them, a “portrait” of our winery as seen from the foot of our Calkins Lane estate vineyard.

PRODUCTION There were 1926 cases of the 2006 Willamette Valley CH produced.

