



Freestone

2006 Freestone Chardonnay

Winemaking Data

Harvest dates: October 1st – 15th, 2006.

Blend & grape source: 100% estate-grown Chardonnay from Freestone Vineyards.

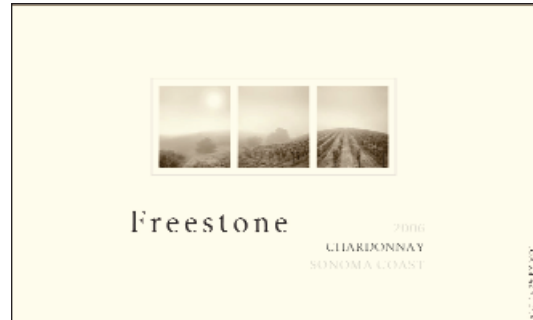
Aging regime: 15 months in French oak barrels (70% new, 30% one- to two-years old) before bottling in February, 2008.

Coopers: Francois Frères, Remond, Demy and Rousseau.

Winemaker's Notes

Chardonnay grapes were harvested later than expected in 2006 but they arrived in immaculate condition. Though many local producers suffered botrytis infection due to cool, wet weather, Freestone suffered no such damage. The skins were crunchy and packed with flavor, while the berries were plump and juicy, boasting lots of natural acidity. This framework produced three very special groups of wine that make up our first Freestone Chardonnay blend.

The first impression on the nose is cool, with mineral and smoky notes that suggest foggy mornings and rich soil. The palate offers an oily, yet crisp texture with underlying layers of rock, earth and slow-toasted wood, followed by concentrated nectar of stone fruits and a long, steely finish. This Chardonnay blend expresses both our philosophy of winemaking and the essence of the vineyards: through minimal interference and gentle handling, the vital character of the site is allowed to shine through.



The Growing Season

The cool, late ripening growing season of 2006 finished persuasively with near perfect maturity levels. This came as a huge relief as the Sonoma Coast received over nine feet of rain! The wet soil conditions slowed initial vine growth but had less impact on fruit set, which occurred in early June. Following a brief heat spell at the end of July – our first real and much needed heat of the season – veraison began; further crop reduction in the form of green harvesting helped mitigate the late start and long-range weather concerns. This maneuver proved critical as August and September temperatures were significantly below normal.

Although slight rainfall occurred on the 4th and 5th of October, it was with great relief that warm, dry and windy conditions materialized for the balance of the month, bringing the fruit to favorable maturity. The long, cool growing season provided higher acid content, thicker skins, more fragrance and flavor, and exceptional varietal transparency.