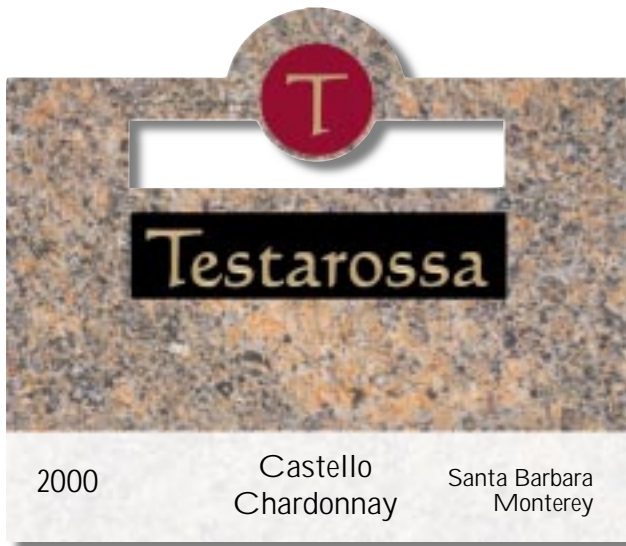


2000 Castello Chardonnay



2000 Vintage

90 points ☼☼

Testarossa scores again with this outgoing, rich, oaky, tropical-toned opus. We like also its minerally touch of terroir and its fleshy, oily mouthfeel. It delivers plenty of depth in oak-coated flavors whose citrus peel and ripe apple notes keep things alive and balanced. Its finish is long, ripe and somewhat hot, and service with rich salmon or chicken dishes is called for here.

Connoisseurs' Guide – May 2002

91 points

A richly flavored yet elegantly crafted wine that's sleek and polished, with ripe pear, fig, honeysuckle and honeydew melon flavors that turn smooth and creamy, picking up subtle nutmeg and hazelnut nuances on the finish.

The Wine Spectator – March 2002



California Central Coast

1999 Vintage

91+ points ☼☼☼

Here is a deep, fully packed Chardonnay that stands among the leaders of the vintage so far when it comes to sheer stuffing and strength of character. It opens with intense aromas of apples, oak, lees and toasted coconut and follows with big flavors that echo all the richness and attractive component parts of the nose. It carries some youthful angularity just now, but its future is bright, and its balance and depth suggest that cellaring will make it even better.

Connoisseurs' Guide – April 2001

90 points

Medium-light golden yellow; attractive, forward, toasty, nutty, creamy, ripe tropical fruit aroma that developed with airing in the glass; full body; forward, rich supple, toasty, ripe pear and apple flavors with a plush mouth feel; well balanced; lingering aftertaste. Very highly recommended.

California Grapevine – September 2001

2000 CASTELLO CHARDONNAY

Our 2000 Castello is a handcrafted blend from five of the Central Coast's finest vineyards. From Santa Barbara County come the two major components of the 2000 Castello, more specifically from the Bien Nacido Vineyard and the Clos Pepe Vineyard. Bien Nacido is the largest, oldest, and probably the best-known vineyard from which we purchase fruit. The growing season is always extremely long there, and this allows the bright and tropical fruit flavors to develop fully.

About 30 miles to the southwest lies the Clos Pepe Vineyard, in a subsection of the Santa Ynez Valley Appellation called the Santa Rita Hills. Compared with Bien Nacido, Clos Pepe is even cooler in the summer, with temperatures rarely reaching 70°. This also leads to a long growing season, but the flavors we see at Clos Pepe are quite different from Bien Nacido. Here we get a very Burgundian style of Chardonnay with mineral overtones and naturally high acidity that will prolong the ageability of the Castello.

To the north, in Monterey County, are found the other three vineyards that make up the 2000 Castello. In the Santa Lucia Highlands Appellation, the venerable Sleepy Hollow Vineyard lies just west of the town of Gonzales. We have purchased Chardonnay from the Talbotts (who own Sleepy Hollow) every year since 1997. Just two miles south of Sleepy Hollow is the youthful and promising Rosella's Vineyard, owned by Gary Francioni who, along with Gary Pisoni, also owns Garys' Vineyard. The flavors that come from these two fine Santa Lucia Highlands vineyards are of the citrus sort, mixed with passion fruit and honey: quite an intriguing combination.

The final vineyard that makes up the 2000 Castello Chardonnay is also found in Monterey County. The Michaud Vineyard has been a Testarossa favorite since the 1995 vintage when, then Chalone winemaker, Michael Michaud sold us Chardonnay from his own vineyard. The vineyard lies on the western edge of the Pinnacles National Monument in the Gavilan Mountains. The decomposed granite/limestone soil there, as well as the warm, dry days and cool, foggy nights provide the wine with a rich mouthfeel and aromas of peach, melon and mineral.

All of the Chardonnay which makes up the 2000 Castello was barrel-fermented in our cellar in a combination of new, one, two and three-year old French oak barrels. The majority of the wine was uninoculated, in other words, no yeast was added to the barrels, and it fermented with native yeast. The wine also went through a malo-lactic fermentation, and sat on its original lees until it was racked prior to bottling ten months after it was harvested. In the summer of 2001 we tasted and re-tasted each of these barrels until we arrived at the perfect blend for our 2000 Castello Chardonnay.

VINEYARD:

Bien Nacido Vineyard, Clos Pepe Vineyard, Michaud Vineyard, Rosella's Vineyard, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard

Appellation: 71% Santa Barbara County
29% Monterey County

First Testarossa vintage: 1999

HARVEST:

Sugar: 24.2° Brix

Total acidity: 7.6 g/L

pH: 3.38

Date harvested: September 6 through October 20, 2000

BOTTLE:

Alcohol: 14.1%

Total acidity: 6.7 g/L

pH: 3.51

Bottling date: September 6, 2001

Time in oak: 10 months

Percent new oak: 35%

Production: 2,466 cases, 750mL
250 cases, 375mL

Release date: May 1, 2002

Suggested Retail Price: 750mL \$26.00
375mL \$13.00

Optimum time for consumption: 2002-2005