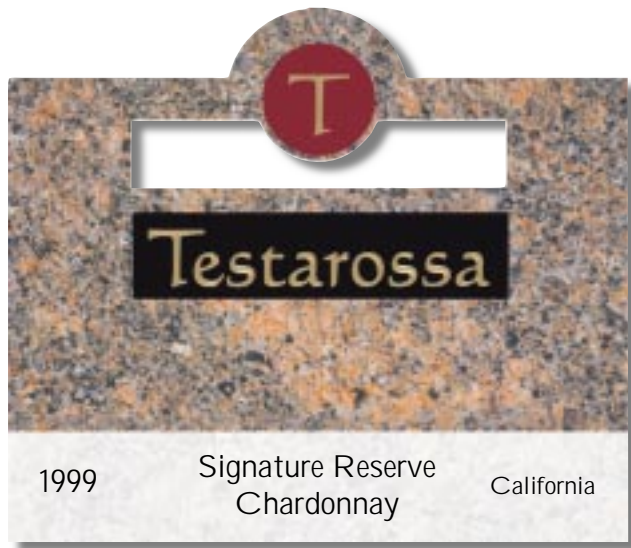


# 1999 Signature Reserve Chardonnay



## Connoisseur's Guide

"Both rich and brisk. Complex and solid"

## Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

"Dramatic and intense. A flamboyant-styled, full bodied Chardonnay"

## Wine & Spirits

"Super-rich and ripe, a full-textured white to serve with meaty foods"

## 1998 vintage

**91 points**, This is a big, delicious mélange of pineapple, pears, buttered popcorn and coconut vying with mineral and toasty oak elements. Fat and friendly, it's got the goods to hold the taster's interest. The California Cuvee designation means that it's made of fruit from many places - more proof that good bottles are not all vineyard designated or single AVA wines.

*The Wine Enthusiast, July 2001*

## 1997 vintage

**92 points**, Concentrated and oaky. Very intense and concentrated, with peach, pear and fig notes. Notable for its limpid, soft quality. Creamy and smooth. A very fine, elegant wine.

*The Wine Enthusiast, May 2000*

**91 points**, Serves up a wide range of spicy, fruity flavors, with pear, fig, apple, melon, citrus and apricot. Holds its focus, turning elegant and complex.

*Wine Spectator, December 1999*

## 1996 Vintage

**93 points**, Wonderful ripeness, richness and complexity, with layers of pear, hazelnut, fig, apricot and citrus notes. Full-bodied and concentrated.

*The Wine Spectator, November 1999*

## 1995 Vintage

**92 points**, Intense and smoky, with a good dose of toasty oak. Underneath, the core of citrus, pear, fig and melon flavors is complex and lively, finishing in a long, rich aftertaste.

*The Wine Spectator, March 1998*

**90 points**, "The 1995 Signature Reserve may ultimately merit a higher score. It displays ripe tropical fruits and mineral notes in the restrained aromatics. In the mouth the wine is full-bodied with high quality toasty oak, good acidity, and fine length."

*Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, August, 1998*



California Central Coast

Our Signature Reserve is the result of countless enjoyable hours spent tasting all of the Chardonnay barrels from the six vineyards we purchased fruit from in the 1999 harvest. Starting in late May 2000, we gathered samples and conducted a series of blind tastings, with each sample representing one barrel of wine. This is how we determine which barrels will be vineyard designated, which barrels make the best Castello Chardonnay blend, and which barrels are the cream of the crop and are destined for our Signature Reserve Chardonnay. Of the 170 barrels tasted, only 15 achieved a near-perfect score. After more blind tastings to select our finest cuvée, we narrowed the field down to the final ten: five barrels from the Michaud Vineyard and five from the Bien Nacido Vineyard.

These two vineyards are very different from each other. The Michaud Vineyard sits high in the Gavilan Mountains, next to the Pinnacles National Monument in Monterey County. The soil is rich in limestone, the vines are planted on steep slopes, and the climate is a mix of hot, dry days and cool, sometimes foggy nights. The daytime highs and nighttime lows swing so widely that it is not uncommon to see the temperature go from 100 degrees down to 50 degrees in a span of just twelve hours. This unique site in the Chalone Appellation produces some of California's longest-lived wines, with a distinctive and Burgundian mineral quality.

The Bien Nacido Vineyard lies in the Santa Maria Valley of northern Santa Barbara County. The vines there are planted on a gentle slope, almost identical to Burgundy's fame Cote'dor, the soil is a shaley loam, and the climate is a consistently cool, marine-influenced, mixture of sun and fog. The chardonnay in this vineyard tends to ripen very slowly, and is often some of the last fruit we harvest each year. As a result, Bien Nacido Vineyard produces some of the most intensely flavored Chardonnay in California. In a year like 1999, when the fruit stayed on the vines until early November, that intensity is even more pronounced with the extra long hang time.

The marriage of Michaud Vineyard and the Bien Nacido Vineyard in this wine are a beautiful complement to each other; a match made in heaven.

## 1999 SIGNATURE RESERVE CHARDONNAY

### VINEYARD:

Michaud Vineyard, Bien Nacido Vineyard

**Appellation:** California

**First Testarossa vintage:** 1995

### HARVEST:

**Sugar:** Michaud, 23.7° Brix

Bien Nacido, 24.6° Brix

**Total acidity:** Michaud, 6.6 g/L

Bien Nacido, 8.0 g/L

**pH:** Michaud, 3.45

Bien Nacido, 3.32

**Date harvested:** Michaud - October 1-14, 1999

Bien Nacido - November 1, 1999

### BOTTLE:

**Alcohol:** 14.5%

**Total acidity:** 6.4 g/L

**pH:** 3.43

**Bottling date:** November 17, 2000

**Time in oak:** 12 months

**Percent new oak:** 50%

**Production:** 179 cases, 750mL

129 cases, 375mL

**Release date:** September 1, 2001

**Suggested retail price:** \$44.00

**Optimum time for consumption:** 2001-2006

**Color:** Medium yellow gold

**Nose:** Rich, ripe, honeyed fruit. Exotic aromas of asian spices intermingle with hints of crème brûlée.

**Palate:** Full bodied, with well -intergrated oak and a touch of nuttiness. Lengthy finish. Pear, tangerine, apricots, and apples combine to make this wine into a bold, intense, fruit driven chardonnay. Drink now or age for three to four years.