



# Merry Monks

Wine Club of Cantiga Wineworks

PO Box 66, Somerset, CA 95684 (530) 621-1696 merrymonks@cantigawine.com



## Nature vs. Nurture?

August 1, 2015

Thank you for your continued support of our Merry Monks Wine Club! We are pleased to offer you our summer Merry Monks wine shipment, which includes a new release, a pre-release and a rare Library wine.

Our theme for this month is “Nature versus Nurture?” This timeless anthropological debate is just as applicable to wine grapes as it is to human beings! To what extent—and in what ways—are the characteristics of wine grapes, and the resulting wines, pre-coded by genetics? Conversely, to what extent are they shaped by their environment, and by the touch of the farmer and/or winemaker?

The three wines in your shipment all epitomize the style we strive for, and yet they also bear the signature characteristics of the vineyards and regions they came from. Following is a discussion of the three vineyards represented here-- Meador Estate, Hart 2 Hart, and Cantiga Estate.

### 2013 Oakless Chardonnay, Monterey

Harvest Brix: 24.5      pH: 3.40      TA: 7.1      Alc: 14.2%      ML: 0%      RS: 0%  
Cases produced: 309      Barrel age: None; 1 ½ years in stainless steel

Our new Monterey Chardonnay is here! Thank you for your patience in waiting for the next vintage of our most spectacular and well-loved white.

In the vineyard: This vintage was grown in Meador Estate Vineyards, next to Ventana Vineyard in Arroyo Seco, Monterey. This unique region benefits from the cooling effects of the Monterey Bay. As the Salinas valley heats up during the day, cool air is drawn in from the bay, causing afternoon temperatures to drop and wind speeds to increase. A summer cooling pattern covers the vineyard and cools it from about 4pm until 10am the following day. These lower temperatures allow grapes to store the sugars at a much slower rate, creating intense, pure flavors. Doug Meador, a pioneer in California viticulture, has been cultivating vines in the region since the 1970s. He was an innovator in finding the best methods for growing grapes in a cool climate. Our Monterey Chardonnay exemplifies the best of the Arroyo Seco terroir, with its round, mouth-filling, pure fruit, excellent acidity and elegant balance.

In the winery: The traditional style of Chardonnay in California, through the 1970s up until the early '80s, was a Chablis style—fermented and aged in stainless steel, dry and non-malolactic. Karl Wente was instrumental in introducing stainless steel vessels with temperature control and oxygen elimination to the American industry at the time, revolutionizing white wine production. The emphasis with this style is on purity of fruit and cleansing acidity. During the 1980s there was a shift in favor of malolactic fermentation and the use of oak barrels in Chardonnay production. This new aesthetic emphasized a “buttery” mouth feel and taste, as well as a softer acidity. This style endures today, although we are starting to see the pendulum swing back.

We personally prefer the older style of Chardonnay, and so continue the Chablis tradition. The major benefit of this style, from our perspective, is its incredible compatibility with food. With the benefit of Monterey fruit (citrus and tropical) and acidity, this is not a tutti-frutti, sip at the poolside with an ice cube wine. This is a white that enhances any meal that it accompanies, from Thai to Burmese cuisine to sushi, not to mention any sort of seafood or fowl. Serve it at cellar temperature (55 degrees). It is also an aging wine, if you have the proper means of cellaring it; we have similar wines in our cellar that are spectacular at 20+ years of age!

ESTATE WINERY & TASTING ROOM: 5980 Meyers Lane, Somerset, CA 95684  
[www.cantigawine.com](http://www.cantigawine.com)

## 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon, El Dorado – Pre-release

Harvest Brix: 23.8      pH: 3.54      TA: 7.0      Alc: 13.9%      ML: 0%      RS: 0%  
Cases produced: 183      Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

In the vineyard: We were fortunate to have an opportunity to buy Cabernet grapes from Hart 2 Hart Vineyard for three years, beginning in 2010. Overlooking Folsom Lake at an elevation of approximately 1000 feet, Hart 2 Hart Vineyard is lower in elevation than those we have worked with in the past. The Cabernet grapes it yields is slightly lower in tannin and acidity, suggesting dark cherries rather than our usual brighter, red cherries. These wines are approachable at a younger age than our Fair Play cabs. However, they remain distinctly Cabernet in character, and distinctly El Dorado in structure and depth.

In the winery: Most winemakers follow the modern practice of making Cabernet that appeals to a broad audience, including younger consumers who are relatively new to wine. A modern Cabernet leans toward ripe, jammy fruit, lower extraction of tannin, a plump mouth feel, plenty of oak and a hint of residual sugar. In contrast, we strive for a European style—dry, balanced and elegantly structured. Our fruit expresses purely, as intense cherry with a hint of spicy green pepper. Aging the wine in neutral oak barrels for three years allows the wine to continue to develop without having the fruit overshadowed by oak. Though Cabernet tends to be a good candidate for cellaring in general, our non-ML vibrancy, rich concentration and firm tannins make it desirable to age longer than most—with rewarding gain of complexity and balance. Again, our goal is a food wine, so think grilled red meats, mushroom dishes and garlic-rosemary roasted potatoes.

## 2008 “Library” Petite Sirah, Estate

Harvest Brix: 25.3      pH: 3.49      TA: 7.5      Alc: 15.5%      ML: 0%      RS: 0%  
Cases produced: 175      Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

We are pleased to be able to offer you a rare, “Library” vintage of our Estate Petite Sirah. We held back just enough of this wine to give our club a chance to experience what extended cellaring can do for this wine. Our Ambassadors of Oenos (12-bottle/qtr) club will receive the added benefit of having their Library Petite Sirah offering divided between the 2008 and 2006 vintages.

In the vineyard: The Cantiga Vineyard was planted in 2002, at 2400 feet in elevation. It was painstakingly designed to maximize the benefits that can be gleaned from the Fair Play AVA. We took into consideration the trajectory of the sun, the contours, and adopted narrow row and vine spacing and vertical trellising. We chose varieties and clones that were proven to do particularly well in our area, and we’ve raised them using deficit irrigation management to allow the vines to struggle a little without depleting them, thus enhancing fruit quality. In a sense, our nurturing of the vineyard has allowed nature to do its best. The fruit that comes from this vineyard benefits from the structure and balance that the region naturally produces, while our particular farming techniques give us a richness, complexity and depth that is hard to duplicate.

In the winery: As with our Syrah, we swim against the stream stylistically with our Petite Sirah. By doing a slow, cooler fermentation, avoiding malolactic and fermenting until the wine is dry (0% residual sugar), aging for three years in neutral oak and allowing the wine to unfold with minimal intervention and manipulation, we arrive at a wine that is classically structured and elegant. Petite Sirah at the other end of the spectrum can be huge, untamed and overwhelming when paired with food. A classic-style Petite Sirah such as ours can be wonderful with Italian food, wild game and grilled red meats.

Yours truly,

*Rich & Christine Rorden*