

TAPANAPPA

A U S T R A L I A

TAPANAPPA TIERS VINEYARD 2006 CHARDONNAY

History

In 1978 Brian Croser selected the Piccadilly Valley in the centre of the Adelaide Hills as the best terroir in which to grow Chardonnay for Petaluma Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and Chardonnay for the sparkling wine Croser.

The Tiers Vineyard was the first vineyard planted in the Adelaide Hills since the 19th century. It is in the centre of the Piccadilly Valley at 450 metres ASL, and is where Brian and Ann Croser live and where they built the Petaluma Winery in 1978.

The Tiers Vineyard is 3 hectares of 26 year-old Chardonnay with closer spacing (3330 vines/hectare) and vertical canopy, the first Australian mainland vineyard on this configuration. The oldest vines on the Tiers were pulled out in 2002 to make way for Dijon Chardonnay Clones 95 and 96 on rootstocks that were planted in 2003 on even closer spacing of 1.5m x 1.5m or 4440 vines/hectare. The fruiting wire of the new vines has been dropped from 0.8m to 0.5m from the ground to take ripening advantage of ground warmth at night. This new planting of 1.5 hectares will be used in Tapanappa Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay when the vines mature.

The Piccadilly Valley is the coolest and highest rainfall viticultural sub-region in South Australia. It is a homo-clime of Dijon in Burgundy, with an average heat summation for the growing season of just 1172°C days and an annual rainfall in excess of 1200 mm.

The soils in the Tiers Vineyard are free draining, red-brown clay loams with a high content of clay (50%+) and rock fragments from the 1600 million year-old Calc-silicate parent rock that exists only beneath Tiers Vineyard and a small portion of the neighbouring properties.

From 2005 Ann Croser, the owner, has agreed to divide the crop of the Tiers Vineyard between Petaluma and Tapanappa.

Vintage Notes

2006 was a cool and dry harvest in the Piccadilly Valley, accruing 1142°C days of heat during the growing season versus the average of 1172°C days. In October, the Tiers Vineyard was badly frosted for the first time since planting and two thirds of the crop was lost. Only those vines unaffected by frost were hand harvested for Tapanappa Tiers Vineyard 2006 Chardonnay.

The very small crop was initially delayed in its ripening processes by the frost but quickly caught up to be harvested slightly earlier than normal on the 31st of March. The analysis of the fruit at delivery was sugar 24.8 Brix, pH 3.3 and acid of 7.8gpl as tartaric.

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Winemaking Notes

The hand picked Tiers Chardonnay fruit was delivered to the winery adjacent to the vineyard. The fruit was de-stemmed and chilled to 5°C on the way to the air bag press. The cold juice was gravitated away from the skins and only light pressings were added back. A low level of SO₂ was added to the juice on the way to the tank where the juice was allowed to settle for 4 days. The SO₂ was the only addition to the juice prior to fermentation.

The clear juice was racked to new (70%) and 1 use (30%) oak barriques from the French forest of Vosges. A selected yeast strain, native to the vineyard, was added to initiate fermentation and the bacteria for the malo-lactic fermentation was added at the same time.

The primary fermentation was complete in 6 weeks after which the yeast lees were stirred in the barriques weekly until the malo-lactic fermentation was complete 2 months later. At the end of malo-lactic fermentation the wine was racked from barrique, SO₂ was added and the wine was put back to sit on lees for a further 6 months.

After a total of 10 months in barrique, the 2006 Tapanappa Tiers Chardonnay was clear racked from barrique and prepared for bottling. The wine was bottled without filtration in February of 2007.

The in-bottle analysis of 2006 Tapanappa Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay is:
Alcohol 13.5%, pH 3.16, total acid 6.8 gpl as tartaric, SO₂ 133 ppm, volatile acid 0.16 gpl.

The Taste of the Wine

Following the outstanding success of the 2005 Tapanappa Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay it is disappointing to have only 150 cases of the 2006 due to frost.

However, the vineyard terroir still dominates the 2006 Tapanappa Tiers Chardonnay, as it does the 2005. The aroma is complex but more nectarine than peach and the flavours are more latent although very intense and with high natural acid even after malo-lactic fermentation. This is a wine that opens up in the glass and will benefit from time in bottle. Typical of Tiers Vineyard Chardonnay, the 2006 has significant texture and length of flavour although the finish is suitably savoury.

Winemaker: Brian Croser

Only 150 cases produced