



Background—As the winemakers of the Oregon wine renaissance re-established vinifera grapes in the 1960's and 1970's, the wine regions of Northern Europe (especially Burgundy and Alsace) provided their models. However, the only legal place to get grapevines was California. When it came to Chardonnay, the choices were three late-ripening selections - Draper, Wente, and 108 - all selected for warmer climates than Oregon's. Though some fine wines were produced, autumn rainstorms frequently arrived before these selections were fully ripe. While working in Burgundy in 1974, David Adelsheim saw that Chardonnay there ripened at the same time as Pinot noir, not two-to-three weeks later as in Oregon. So, at his (and others') urging, Oregon State University imported a number of Chardonnay clones from Burgundy during the years 1977 to 1988, and starting in 1989, these "Dijon" clones were released to growers. Today, the resulting wines have entirely different flavors than those of the old California selections; they are, in fact, much more like those of white Burgundy. And yes, the grapes ripen at the same time as Pinot noir.

Growing Season—Since the rainfall pattern of the Willamette Valley has much more in common with the rest of the West Coast than Burgundy, we're thankful for an above-average, winter water recharge of our soils, such as happened in January of 2002. But we don't want the rains to continue too far into the spring! In 2002, the rains diminished and we start getting warmer weather around March. Bud-break came well before Easter, and flowering in mid-June (just as we like it, as well!). Dry weather at this point helped give us the largest crop since 1997, forcing us to make several crop thinning passes to achieve the proper balance. Rain in mid-August, just before veraison, helped the vines stave off drought-stress and create intense fruit flavors, and then it stayed pretty dry through the end of harvest. Thus, the wines of 2002 have turned out as rich and as balanced as we've seen since 1999.

Vineyards—The 2002 Caitlin's Reserve comes from three basaltic-soil vineyards planted to the early-ripening "Dijon" clones. Two thirds of the wine comes from Stoller Vineyard in the Dundee Hills (Clone 76), while the other third (a mix of clones) was a barrel each from Knudsen Vineyard and Archery Summit. It's noteworthy that these sites are all volcanic in origin, meaning that the soils are deep and well drained, though with some water-holding capability provided by their clay content. By use of irrigation and/or careful clean cultivation, these vineyards are managed to avoid drought-stress, and thus insure fruit intensity while avoiding excess tannins.

Winemaking—To produce this wine, we used the same 'barrel-centric' winemaking that has always been employed by the top Burgundy producers. Following a gentle, whole-cluster pressing to separate the juice from the skins as quickly as possible, the juice was transferred to small French oak barrels, of which 33% were new, medium-toast, Vosges- and Allier-origin wood. After undergoing primary and malolactic fermentations, the lees of the wines were stirred every two weeks to add complexity. *Sur lie* aging for 15 months allowed the Chardonnay and oak flavors to meld, and for the oak tannins to elongate, thereby softening and rounding the wine. After being racked from barrel, the wine was bottled on January 17, 2004.

The Wine—The 2002 bottling offers a lovely bouquet of zesty sweet lemons, hazelnuts, and a restrained touch of French oak, along with floral and spice notes. The wine holds layers of complex yet focused flavors of citrus (sweet lemons again) and minerals, beautifully balanced acidity, and a long, sweet finish with just a hint of wood tannin at the end. This Chardonnay will pair beautifully with poached salmon, lobster, smoked meats and cheeses, and spicy dishes.

The Label—The label portrait by Ginny Adelsheim is of Caitlin Wells, the daughter of Ginny's lifelong friend, Connie Kiener. Both Connie and Caitlin lived at our Quarter Mile Lane vineyard house in the late 1970's. At age five, Caitlin was making change at our open-house tastings. She's now a pediatric nurse in Portland with a daughter of her own.

The Quantity—Total production of the 2002 Caitlin's Reserve Chardonnay was 1,680 bottles (750ml), released in cartons of six.