



SPRING
LETTER,
2007

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Peter Michael Winery's estate vineyards are a paradox, a unique place, where warm climate and cool climate grapes grow almost side-by-side, and both achieve exquisite quality. The secret to this diversity is a subtle interplay between temperature, slope, sun, wind, soil, and altitude.

Stretching across the south facing slopes of Mt. Saint Helena, the estate's 120 planted acres, are home to four distinctly different vineyards and two very dif-



A PARADOX ON IDA CLAYTON RIDGE

Viewed from high on the Peter Michael Estate, an ocean of fog rolls into Knights Valley from the west. Its advancing fingers outline the route that cool marine air takes before climbing Ida Clayton Ridge and cooling our Chardonnay vineyards.

ferent climate zones. The warmest and lowest vineyard, Les Pavots, at 1,200 to 1,600 feet above sea level, is home to the red and white Bordeaux varietals that make up our L'Après-Midi, Les Pavots and L'Esprit des Pavots blends. The higher, cooler vineyards, La Carrière, Belle Côte, and Ma Belle-Fille, at 1,600 to 2,000 feet, are devoted almost exclusively to Chardonnay.

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A PARADOX ON IDA CLAYTON RIDGE

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The floor of Knights Valley, at about 500 feet above sea level, is a relatively warm growing region known for its ability to ripen Cabernet Sauvignon with great consistency. Move up from the valley floor onto the slopes of Mt. Saint Helena and climate becomes more dynamic. The Peter Michael Estate is blessed with a unique blend of two effects that provide the temperature zones required to grow cool climate Chardonnay and warmer climate Bordeaux varietals, and provide each with the conditions required to excel. First, as a general rule, temperature drops 2-4 degrees Fahrenheit for every 1,000 feet of altitude gain. This alone would account for substantial differences between the bottom and top of our vineyards. Second, there is a concentration of cooling marine air on the upper slopes of the vineyards that is truly magic.

It is widely accepted that the most important determinant of vineyard character in California is temperature. Vineyard temperature is determined more by access to cool marine air than by the position of a vineyard north or south. Everyone has seen pictures of San Francisco shrouded in fog. This is a summertime phenomenon driven by warm inland temperatures. It heats up inland, the warm air rises, and the rising air pulls cool marine air in from the ocean. However, the rugged topography of Northern California determines where the cool marine air can penetrate. The steep ridges of the Coast Range block its inland advance except where there is a natural break in the range. The Golden Gate offers one such break. Further north, the mouth of the Russian River and a set of rolling coastal hills know as the Petaluma wind gap, provide entry to the marine air that cools our property.

Satellite imagery faithfully renders the topography of the estate vineyards. The arrow illustrates the typical path of afternoon marine airflow. Pressed against the “knob” of La Carrière Vineyard on Ida Clayton Ridge, it hooks up through the Belle-Cote and Ma Belle-Fille Vineyards before continuing over the pass into Lake County.

The Chardonnay harvest: this view from the La Carrière Vineyard dramatically illustrates its rocky steepness and its position above the Les Pavots Vineyard in the background.





“Being able to grow high quality vineyards of Bordeaux and Burgundy varietals on the same estate is unique.”

— Nick Morlet,
Winemaker



Cabernet Sauvignon is harvested in the Les Pavots Vineyard. Warmed by its south-facing exposure, this vineyard's position on the mountain keeps it out of the concentrated marine influence that cools our neighboring Chardonnay vineyards, just to the west and further up the slope.

Ida Clayton Road hugs the estate as it climbs from the floor of Knights Valley over the western shoulder of Mt. Saint Helena. The road takes this route because it is the lowest pass over the ridgeline. Lake County on the other side is significantly hotter than Knights Valley. This creates a powerful draw, pulling marine air through Knights Valley and over the pass. The bowl-like shape of Knights Valley channels the marine air entering from the west and forces it to wrap tightly around Ida Clayton Ridge as it turns north and is pulled over the ridgeline into Lake County. Every afternoon, this effect concentrates cool air on our Chardonnay vineyards. The Les Pavots vineyard, a few hundred yards to the east and lower on the mountain, is left very much out of the path of this cooling influence.

Weather stations on our property dramatically confirm this effect, with daily high temperatures during ripening of as much as eight degrees difference between the middle of

Les Pavots at 1,400 feet and the top of Ma Belle-Fille at 2,000 feet. The difference in daily high is only part of the picture. Les Pavots reaches its daily high earlier in the day and holds this temperature longer. Cooler overnight because of their higher altitude, the Chardonnay vineyards reach their peak temperature later in the day, and hold it for only a short period before the effects of the marine air cool them significantly.

As Peter Michael winemaker Nicolas Morlet observes, “Being able to grow high quality vineyards of Bordeaux and Burgundy varietals on the same estate is unique.” It is certain that the paradoxical “magic” found on our estate plays an essential role in the character of our wines.



2007 SPRING RELEASE TASTING NOTES

2005 LA CARRIÈRE

Estate Vineyard Chardonnay



A terroir-driven minerality remains the signature of this vineyard with aromas of crushed stone, lily, hazelnut and sweet pear. Touches of mandarin orange and sweet vanilla complete the elegant bouquet. Notes of citrus oils, white peaches, and lemon highlight the minerality. Rich and intense, 2005 La Carrière presents wonderful concentration and elegance on the palate. Bright acidity and minerality will allow it to age well for 10 years, much like its Burgundian cousins from Puligny-Montrachet.

2005 BELLE CÔTE

Estate Vineyard Chardonnay



Distinctly intense and powerfully hedonistic aromas of lychee nuts, citrus and rose petals come to mind with a background of mineral, nutmeg and a final touch of cedar. Weighty in the mouth and creamy, the palate is rich and seamlessly textured. High natural acidity and notes of brioche and pain grillé complete the mouth feel. The 2005 Belle Côte is enjoyable now and will continue to develop its unique character for 10+ years.

2005 CUVÉE INDIGÈNE

Chardonnay



Aromas of candied orange, lemon drop, yellow peaches, dry apricot, dry fig, subtle white truffle and Mirabelle plum interact with touches of vanilla and elements of meringue and crème-brûlée to form this remarkable, multi-layered and intense bouquet. Complexity, richness, ample “gras” and concentration characterize the palate of this spectacular edition of Cuvée Indigène promises to age gracefully for at least a decade.

2004 LES PAVOTS

Estate Vineyard Bordeaux Blend



Saturated ruby color with a nuance of crimson, 2004 Les Pavots reveals an intense bouquet of black cherry, blackcurrant, blueberry and blackberry, which are interspersed with nuances of cedar, cacao, cigar box, black tea, graphite, lavender, forest floor, sweet vanilla and a touch of cloves. Very full-bodied, this wine offers the same rich, ripe fruit impressions on the palate. The mouth feel is full and round, with slightly firm tannins, which lead to a long finish. 2004 Les Pavots will benefit from another year of cellaring for near term enjoyment and will age gracefully for a decade or more.

THE 2006 GROWING SEASON AND HARVEST

By Nicolas Morlet, Winemaker

2006 will be another great ‘Millesime’ for Peter Michael Winery. Winter and spring were very wet, with some hail and snow. A late spring cold snap resulted in slight frost damage in the Ma Belle-Fille vineyard, but did not affect the quality of the harvest. Bud break throughout the estate occurred a little bit late but very evenly, with all varieties budding at the same time; a rare phenomenon. Bloom, the flowering of the vines, proceeded a bit late as well but with perfect warm and dry conditions.

The weather was nearly ideal for fruit development from May through harvest. While there was one sharp heat spike in July, diligent attention by the vineyard staff avoided any crop damage. As the fruit matured, several passes of hand thinning carefully trimmed the yields to a moderately low level, allowing a pure expression of our different terroirs.

Harvest started just a bit later than normal and concluded the first week of November. Excellent sunny conditions and two periods of strong wind significantly accelerated the phenolic and physiologic ripening of our red Bordeaux varieties, allowing us to pick each micro-parcel at the peak of the ripeness. Our high mountainside location kept our vines above the September fog that effected many coastal locations, sparing us the Botrytis issues that damaged the Chardonnay harvest elsewhere in the county.

After long and complete alcoholic fermentation, the 2006 wines are finishing malolactic fermentation and beginning ageing. The whites are reminiscent of the great 2005 vintage, with bright natural acidity, excellent purity of fruit, and great concentration. Tastings later this spring should confirm the classic character of the reds and stellar quality of the 2006 vintage of Peter Michael. Santé!

“Mountain vineyards, classical winemaking, limited production”



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SAVE THE DATES!
CHARITY FUNDRAISERS TO BENEFIT:

SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 2007
SONATAS IN RED

Violinist Elizabeth Pitcairn
Live on the lawn at the
Peter Michael Estate



HANDS AND HEARTS
FOR CANCER

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 2007
STARS 2007

Dinner & Live Auction at Côte Deux Mille
2000 feet above sea level on the
Peter Michael Estate

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