



2004 BIEN NACIDO CUVÉE

This wine is 50% Chardonnay from Bien Nacido Vineyards in the Santa Maria Valley, 28% Viognier from Bien Nacido, 16% Viognier from Vogelzang Vineyard in Santa Ynez and 6% Viognier from the Noel Vineyard in Los Olivos. Normally all of the grapes for this wine come from Bien Nacido, hence the name. But in 2004 the Viognier at Bien Nacido was hit by bad weather during flowering and set and we barely got a ton to the acre. I scrambled for some extra Viognier and was able to get a little bit from the two vineyards in the Santa Ynez Valley.

As always with this wine the idea is to take advantage of the characteristics of ultra ripe Viognier – grapes pickled between 25° – 26° brix, balanced by Chardonnay grapes from our first picking at Bien Nacido – Y Block – in '04 that was at 22.6° brix.

All of the grapes were whole cluster pressed, the juice settled overnight and then transferred to barrel for fermentation. I use 3 to 5 year old neutral François Frères for all of the lots that go into this wine. While in barrel, we allow the wine to go through malo. 750 cases were bottled in March 2005.

This is a very showy Bien Nacido Cuvée. The Viognier from the warmer Santa Ynez Valley vineyards, especially the Vogelzang, give this an even more lifted Viognier aroma. Peaches, honey, with hints of tropical fruits and citrus, balanced by the structure and great acidity of the Chardonnay. The Chardonnay also balances the alcohol in this wine (the label says 13.5%, it's actually 13.7%) so that this can so nicely with different foods. There is an impression of sweetness from the ripe Viognier but the wine is completely dry. We find it goes especially well with Hawaiian Regional Cuisine, Indian food or any other dish that's full flavored and incorporates a bit of sweet and spice. This wine is not meant for the cellar, drink now and over the next two years.