

*Charles Ranch*  
**CHARDONNAY**

*The Charles Ranch was once one of the largest sheep ranches in Sonoma County. The Charles family raised sheep in this coastal countryside for over 130 years since acquiring the land during the Homestead Act. My grandfather, George Charles, was a fourth generation rancher in the vast rugged hills and raised 2,000 head of sheep along with a small herd of bison. The phasing out of the sheep industry in the 1970's forced George Charles to look at other agricultural avenues of profitability. Eventually sheep ranching became an unprofitable business when laws were passed in favor of coyotes and not ranchers. He was near retirement but wanted a continuing income from the ranch so his heirs would not lose their homeland to inheritance tax. Thus, the prospect of growing grapes emerged. George's son-in-law, Lee Martinelli Sr., was a successful third generation grapegrower and consulted with George as to which grape variety would be the most suitable to plant in this unique climate.*

*This distinct micro-climate is two miles inland from the Pacific coastline at Fort Ross and is ideally suited for growing Burgundian varietals. In 1980 George sold his buffalo herd and used the steep 14 acre pasture to plant Chardonnay, becoming a pioneer of grape growing in an area that is now considered a prime viticultural region.*

*The grapes are picked at 25 degrees brix to ensure mature ripe fruit flavors. They are hand selected at harvest time by Lee Martinelli and Helen Turley, who taste the grapes and choose when to pick according to the developed flavors in the berries. The wine is 100% barrel fermented with wild yeast and encouraged to fully complete malo-lactic fermentation. It is unfinned and unfiltered and rests in 65% new French oak for 11 months before bottling. This is a handcrafted wine. It is unfinned, unfiltered, neither cold nor heat stabilized and contains naturally occurring sediment. We recommend decanting or allowing the bottle to sit upright in a cool place prior to serving. Salute!*

*Wine Maker: Helen Turley      Assistant Wine Maker: Bryan Kvamme*

***The Charles Ranch Chardonnay in the Press***

1994 Vintage ~ 91 pts. Robert Parker, Jr.

1995 Vintage ~ 91 pts. Robert Parker, Jr. ~ 91 pts. Wine Spectator

1996 Vintage ~ 90 pts. Robert Parker, Jr. ~ 90 pts. Steve Tanzer

1997 Vintage ~ 90 pts. Robert Parker, Jr. ~ 91 pts. Steve Tanzer

1998 Vintage ~ 90 pts. Robert Parker, Jr.

1999 Vintage ~ 90 pts. Robert Parker, Jr.

2000 Vintage ~ 90 pts. Stephen Tanzer

2001 Vintage ~ 89-92 pts. Robert Parker, Jr. ~ 90 pts. Stephen Tanzer

**2002 Vintage ~ 92 pts. Robert Parker, Jr. ~ 90 pts. Stephen Tanzer ~ 95 pts. Wine Spectator**  
*"A yummy Chardonnay with rich, concentrated flavors and a smooth, creamy texture. Deftly balanced and sharply focused, the core pear, fig, honey, citrus and spicy pineapple flavors unfold gracefully and finish with a long, persistent aftertaste." 95 pts. James Laube*