



2006 STAR LANE CABERNET SAUVIGNON HAPPY CANYON OF SANTA BARBARA

VINEYARD NOTES

Star Lane Vineyard, located at the far eastern end of the Santa Ynez Valley, is both the warmest and the highest elevation vineyard in the new “Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara” appellation. Backing up to the lower slopes of the San Rafael Mountains which loom high above the ranch, Star Lane features a unique range of weathered sand, gravel and alluvial cobbles over a clay/loam subsoil. With both excellent drainage and good water holding capacity in the subsoil, these conditions mimic those of the best properties of Bordeaux and make an ideal home for the Cabernet Sauvignon we have planted on the steep hillsides and the canyon floor of our estate. Three blocks planted at the summit and along the western ridge of the ranch enjoy a very narrow diurnal temperature fluctuation and consistently produce the lush core of the Star Lane blend. A small bench land section near the mouth of the canyon lends the wine backbone and nerve. Two blocks of Cabernet Franc planted in shallow soils with a gradually sloping eastern exposure and a steep, south facing section of Petit Verdot bring aromatic complexity and intensity to the final blend. In 2006, the addition of Malbec from a one acre east-facing block brings additional volume and breadth to the wine.

VINTAGE NOTES

Average rainfall followed by warm temperatures in late winter caused a very early bud burst in Santa Barbara County—up to 14 days early in some cases. Mid-spring rains, however, slowed things down and had us on our toes about potential disease pressure. Bloom lasted almost two weeks in parts of the vineyard and set was, consequently, erratic. Summer passed with mild temperatures punctuated by our usual two to three day heat spells, and conditions during veraison were favorably warm and consistent. After a slight crop adjustment towards the end of veraison, the vines at Star Lane produced an only slightly below average crop load of intense but very balanced fruit.

WINEMAKING

2006 saw the introduction of our new automated berry sorting machine to the crush pad at Star Lane. This device, affectionately known as “The Monster,” is capable of sorting through destemmed, uncrushed berries in much the same fashion that as many as ten individuals could. Any material other than grapes—for example green, “shot” berries, stem bits and petioles—are removed by way of an intense stream of air focused on the berries as they fall past it. 2006 proved to be the ideal vintage to test drive the machine, and The Monster performed beautifully. Due to erratic winds during set, many blocks of Cabernet on the ridgeline of the ranch suffered severe “shatter”—a condition that is marked by many un-pollinated berries on each cluster—and with our sorting machine we were able to remove them.

Upon destemming, each fermentor is filled with sorted and only lightly crushed fruit. Three days of cold soak is followed by a moderately warm fermentation with native yeast only. At the end of active fermentation, the must is heated to 95°Fahrenheit for three days to extract every last bit of color, flavor and phenolic material that the grapes have to offer. Free run wine is moved to barrel “dirty,” meaning that much of the fermentation lees are kept in contact with the wine and an uninoculated malolactic fermentation typically finishes in the late spring following harvest. The wine is racked from its lees in early July when the final blend is made and is returned to barrel for an additional 9 months. After 18 months in 75% new French oak and a light fining with 3 fresh egg whites per barrel, the 2006 Star Lane Cabernet was bottled unfiltered.

TASTING NOTES

What could have been a very difficult vintage for Bordeaux varietals in Santa Ynez Valley, one plagued by cool weather and severe shatter, has turned out to be a watershed year for our Star Lane Cabernet. In addition to the power and complexity of our previous vintage, we have found a new sense of grace and sophistication in the wine that had been lacking in '05. Licorice accented black cherry and cassis fruit gives way to sweet herb and mocha shadings. On the palate the wine is full yet fresh, and there is a vibrancy to the fruit character that is unique to the '06 vintage. A very tightly wound, high-strung wine upon bottling, the 2006 Star Lane Cabernet has opened itself up into a fresh and striking mouthful that begs both immediate enjoyment and long term cellaring. Drink now or cellar for up to 15 years.

FINISHED WINE

Composition: 78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Cabernet Franc,
3% Petit Verdot, 1% Malbec

Alc: 15.1%

pH: 3.89

TA: 5.1 g/L

STAR LANE
VINEYARD

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