



## 2008 SAUVIGNON BLANC 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. Planted at the southernmost end of the ranch, our small block of Sauvignon Blanc is the only area in our vineyard to see any significant marine influence, with most days beginning and ending under a shroud of cooling fog. Soils are predominantly a deep gravelly loam, eliminating the need for any supplemental irrigation or fertilization beyond the clover cover crop that is shredded in the late spring and allowed to decompose on the soil surface. Vines are planted at a six foot by eight foot spacing, giving 908 vines per acre. At this lower density, the vines have adequate room to spread and fill out the trellis, and extensive canopy management to balance the vigor of the vines is unnecessary. Yields are a natural 3.5 tons per acre, requiring very little manipulation to achieve consistent quantitative and qualitative results.

### VINTAGE NOTES

The 2008 vintage will be remembered as one of the most schizophrenic in recent California history. The second in a series of drought years, 2008 saw the growing season start with relatively low vigor and early irrigation was mandatory. In spite of the tentative growth, the vines put out an enormous number of flowers and the prospect of a very heavy crop load seemed certain.

Then came the heat—record, 95+ degree temperatures prior to bloom. As a protective measure, a judicious amount of water was applied to the vines. But almost as suddenly as the heat began, it vanished and the well-watered plants went berserk, luxuriating in their excess hydration.

And then came the frosts. Five nights of devastating frosts that reduced crop loads by as much as 70%—and in some cases wiped out entire vineyards. We were relatively fortunate, only seeing 30% of our Santa Maria vineyard damaged.

Next: the wind. 10 days of 40+ mile per hour gusts blew during bloom, interrupting proper pollination of the nascent flowers and further limiting the crop load. Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay were particularly hard hit.

So, with all that excess water from early irrigation and frost protection (sprinklers are used for frost protection) and hardly any crop to counteract vigor, vines went extremely berserk. A lot of hand work was required to manage excessively vigorous canopies.

Just to keep things interesting, the season ended with a solid late-October downpour followed by 3 nights of freezing temperatures. Amazingly, the wines from this wild ride of a vintage have turned out to be absolutely delicious.

### WINEMAKING

2008 marks the codification of a clear Star Lane approach to Sauvignon Blanc. The vineyard, farmed 100% organically since 2006, has achieved a state of balance that allows an earlier harvest of fully mature fruit, often 10 days in advance of our neighbors. The result is a wine of moderate alcohol, yet one packed with full, intense flavors that suggest much higher levels of ripeness. Our winemaking has settled on a subtle balance of natural and scientific methods.

Our experiments with warm fermentations proved conclusive in 2007, and with 2008, all lots were fermented at elevated temperatures, often peaking in the mid-eighties range. The resulting wines show a much greater degree of varietal and terroir-specific character, avoiding many of the bubble-gummy notes that typify cold fermentations. Yeast choices have settled upon three cultured selections from the collection at the University of Bordeaux known to express the passion fruit and fresh thyme notes that certain vineyards produce. Our continued commitment to native yeast fermentation in used barrels provides that ultra-concentrated lemon curd and grapefruit sorbet aspects unique to our vineyard.

All lots were fermented and aged on gross lees and were stirred bi-weekly until late May of 2009. After assemblage in tank, the blend was lightly fined with a mixture of skim milk and isinglass and was bottled unfiltered in on August 27th.

### TASTING NOTES

Stainless steel lots bring vivid aromas of wild thyme, gooseberries, guava and nectarine, while the wood lots contribute the rich lemon curd and lemon drop that have been the hallmark of Star Lane Sauvignon Blanc. On the palate, the lots fermented in tank and stainless barrels bring poise and vibrancy to the blend and the barrel fermented lots offer a mouthfeel marked by bottomless concentration. A theoretical combination of traditionally-styled white Bordeaux and modern Sancerre, our 2008 of Star Lane Sauvignon Blanc is delicious now with richly flavored shellfish preparations but will evolve in bottle for as many as 10 years to come.

### FINISHED WINE

Cooperage: 5% new French oak. Balance fermented and aged in used oak and stainless steel.

Alcohol: 13.4%

Total Acid: 10.1 g/L

pH: 3.12

STAR LANE  
VINEYARD

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