

Smith-Madrone Vineyards & Winery

Greetings, friends. We're celebrating our 35th year as we send this...so why not change the format of our release letter?!

Enclosed is an order form for our new releases---2005 Chardonnay, 2006 Riesling, 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon.

Please make sure to let us know if you want to stay on our mailing list----return the enclosed postcard to us or email us with your email!

Our 35th anniversary has given us a chance to muse about what we really are; we've had a chance to 'distill' it for you and not accidentally it reads like an anthem...or maybe a marching song:

We are authentic.

We (still) love going to work.

We really make our wine.

We really grow our grapes.

We are passionate about what we do.

There's a heart and soul to what we do.

When you visit Smith-Madrone, you step into what wine is supposed to be. We represent what wine has been, all over the world, through history.

We are small, hands-on farmer-vintners.

Stop by and see us when you're in the neighborhood.

Stu Smith and Charlie Smith

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2005 CHARDONNAY Wine is a wondrous thing. Every year our wine is made from the same vineyards, pruned by the same people in the same way, cultivated in exactly the same manner and harvested at similar levels of maturity, yet Mother Nature stamps each vintage with a unique set of flavors, senses and character. Vintage dating is a celebration of that uniqueness and diversity.

Our 2005 Chardonnay expresses the uniqueness of the 2005 growing season. This Chardonnay has the most beautiful pale light yellow color, yet when you swirl the wine in your glass and see the viscosity of the wine, your mind starts thinking big, not “petite,” but really big. Then the powerful aroma gives you another hint that this is not just some innocuous Chardonnay made for the masses, and finally the taste confirms just what a special wine this is – truly a mouth filling Chardonnay with loads of flavors to scintillate your taste buds.

At Smith-Madrone our goal is to make artisanal wines which are distinctive and are an expression of both the vintage and us, as vintners, but above all else, are wines which bring pleasure to the senses.

Our vines are 34 years old. This wine is 100% Chardonnay and 100% from our estate vineyards at 1,900-foot elevation on very steep slopes, dry-farmed, in red volcanic soil, surrounding the winery. The wine was entirely barrel fermented and barrel-aged for 11 months. The alcohol is 14.2%; we made 430 cases.

\$25.00 per bottle.

2003 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Looking for that old fashioned Napa Valley kick-ass Cabernet Sauvignon, but without all those harsh tannins? Here it is. On the palate this wine is big, smooth, full and has a velvety mouthfeel. Combine that with a very dark, purplish and very deep ruby-black color. The aroma is just as intriguing, with briary and black cherry aromas, distinct suggestions of crushed violets and lavender and underneath it all are the elegant notes of dark chocolate. If you are getting the idea that we like this wine – you bet we do! Here is a hedonist’s wine, begging for that grilled steak. See it, smell it and taste it – it’s consistent from beginning to end, as great wine should be.

Our vines for this wine are 32 years old. This wine is 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot and 8% Cabernet Franc. The grapes are entirely sourced from our estate vineyards at the top of Spring Mountain in the Napa Valley. The vineyards straddle slopes up to 35% and are dry-farmed. The wine was barrel-aged in new American oak for 22 months. The alcohol is 13.8%; the wine was neither fined nor filtered; we made 2,302 cases.

\$40.00 per bottle.

Do you want to stay on our mailing list? Please return the enclosed card or call or email us your email so we can move into the 20th century. We may move to entirely electronic newsletters in the future. Thank you.

Did you recognize our olive trees and the sloping vineyards around our winery as you leafed through the fall catalogue from Neiman-Marcus? On a glorious day in May a crew from Texas came to shoot photos at Smith-Madrone....we now will be watching the career of statuesque and stunning Quiana, who is featured in the photos.

On December 18 Alan Goldfarb wrote about us in AppellationAmerica.com:

The Smith brothers, Stuart and Charles, have been on top of Spring Mountain since the early 1970s. They've always made wines in the traditional style. That is, the alcohol levels of their Cabernets---which are always priced well below their market value---always come in under the magic 14% mark. Not because of tax purposes but because at anything higher than that, the Smith boys believe the wine to be unbalanced.

Well, thank goodness this 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon is under 14%, because it might be the last. It comes in at 13.88% alcohol. I tasted it twice---once last February and again in early December. Both times there were lovely mint or eucalyptus aromas. The first time there were wild cherries, now there are red plums. While once the wine was brawny, now it's soft and smooth and even elegant with the same layers of earth and minerality I found ten months earlier. There's still that great balance, but make no mistake, there are still plenty of big tannins. So hold it for a couple of years and drink it over the next 12-15 years.

The vineyard, at 1,400-1,900 feet, is dry-farmed. The wine was neither fined nor filtered. The Smiths opted to use 100% new American oak here, for 22 months, which at first manifested in the muscularity of the wine. But almost a year longer in bottle has proven that even domestic wood---like the Smiths themselves---has a certain softness.

In the December 2006 *Gourmet Magazine* Gerald Asher recommended our 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon with the magazine's holiday rib roast, saying

the wine is somber and concentrated; the vines grow on steep mountaintop slopes and are never irrigated.

He also wrote at length about the Spring Mountain District, emphasizing its ‘...still generally wild landscape’ and that Cabernets from this appellation ‘...unravel marvelously, with true wine aromas and flavors that have less to do with fruits and berries than with woods and rocks and nature itself...’

Some of you may have read Jay McInerney's profile of us in the June 2005 issue of *Conde Nast House & Garden*. In November of this year Jay published *A Hedonist in the Cellar: Adventures in Wine* (Alfred A. Knopf) and included the chapter on Smith-Madrone. The book is a compilation of his wine reporting over the past several years for *House & Garden Magazine*. We are proud to report that although the book profiles many winemakers and wineries from around the world, the only Napa Valley winery profiled is....Smith-Madrone! Known for his ground-breaking book *Bright Lights, Big City*, McInerney has published seven works of fiction as well as an earlier book about wine, *Bacchus & Me*.

We're in a section of the book called “Lovers, Fighters and Other Obsessives,” and our companions in this section are Michel Chapoutier, Greg Brewer and Steve Clifton, Remirez de Ganuza, Willy Frank and Randall Grahm.

The original 2005 column was called *The Throw Backs: They aren't well-known, but the Smith Brothers of Smith-Madrone have been producing outstanding Rieslings (and Cabernets and Chardonnays) at old-fashioned prices since the 1970s*. Here is an excerpt: “By the time I reach the top of the Mayacamas Range and follow a rutted road down to the Smith-Madrone property, I feel I've traveled back in time to a prelapsarian Napa, a wild paradise with islands of

vines.....Standing at the top of Spring Mountain in early October...I feel the Riesling concept (it's a cool climate grape) beginning to make sense. I'd learned that the estate also makes cabernet and chardonnay at prices that hadn't been seen in Napa since the Reagan era.When I woke up the next morning...I actually wondered if I had dreamed the whole Smith-Madrone experience—the grizzly brothers, the wild mountaintop, the unreal prices, the anomalous and ambrosial Riesling. I have since confirmed that it was all real, and wrestled with the question of whether or not to share this information with my readers.”

The 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon has literally been ‘showered’ with gold this past year, winning the following gold medals: The Taster’s Guild Wine Competition, Riverside International Wine Competition (also winning the Chairman’s Award), North Of The Gate/Sonoma-Marin Fair, and The Critic’s Challenge.

The 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon also made Appellation America’s Top Ten Wine List for 2006. As they explained: *Regional Correspondents from Appellation America, the premier online wine portal for the North American wine industry, embarked on a yearlong search through North America’s widely diverse wine growing regions and discovered some most interesting palate pleasers, representing a style of winemaking focused primarily on ‘taste of place.’ There are many unique winemaking styles from when and how to press grapes, to the selection of fermentation yeasts, and temperatures. Appellation America’s regional correspondents, all widely respected wine journalists based throughout the nation, focused their recommendations on a style of wine making unique to the wine-growing region itself--its history, micro-climate, or terroir.*

On August 12, wine blogger Alder Yarrow wrote about the 2001 Chardonnay in his Vinography.com ("Wine and food adventures in San Francisco and around the world), as follows:

There are more legends, stories, fairytales, and fables than anyone could count which all involve some guy up on a mountainside somewhere. Sometimes a hermit, sometimes a wizard, sometimes a troll -- sometimes just an old man who went to sleep under a tree for a long, long time. No matter what the story, there's always something a little different about the guy on the mountain, something that is both scary and alluring at the same time.

Stu Smith might be living out yet another version of one of these tales. His start as a winemaker certainly sounds like it belongs in a storybook somewhere: a lone hiker in the early Seventies, stomping through the forests on the mountainside above St. Helena discovers the remains of ancient vineyards and is struck then and there by inspiration.

In deciding to purchase that long forgotten parcel of land, and turn it again into a vineyard, Smith began a thirty-five year odyssey as a pioneer, an iconoclast, and what looks to be a permanent fixture on Napa's Spring Mountain. The venture, begun in 1973 with money from family and friends, is now one of the most established, and perhaps most underappreciated wineries in the Spring Mountain District.

If you were going to start a Napa winery, even back in the Seventies, what would be the first kind of grape you'd plant? Certainly not Riesling. Yet that was the very first grape that Smith planted. Smith-Madrone Winery has produced one ever since. Smith likes to say that he "just didn't know any better," but this winery has been producing good wine for so long that you have to believe that winegrowing and winemaking just came naturally to Smith.

From the first few rows of Riesling, the winery has grown to only a modest thirty or so acres, and after as many years in production, only makes around 4000 cases of wine. Chardonnay and Cabernet are the only varieties that have been added to the portfolio. Smith, along with his brother, and now his sons, like to keep things manageable for a small family who choose to do a surprising number of things by hand.

Perhaps it was inspiration from the 19th century vintners whose traces could still be seen on the land, or perhaps it is the only way Smith could ever have operated, but the winery operates very much on the model of small European cellars. From the small volume of low yield fruit that is hand harvested each year, to barrel fermentation in small lots, Smith Madrone wines are hand-crafted from start to finish.

Tasting Notes: Light yellow-gold in the glass, this wine has a nearly savory nose of buttered popcorn, pineapple and caramel aromas. In the mouth it feels weighty on the tongue, with a lovely texture and flavors of lemon curd and vanilla and a touch of sweet oak, but surprising little given the aging regime. The acid backbone of the wine is good, and introduces a minerality that, along with restraint from the oak, makes this an individualistic Napa Chardonnay, and one that is a pleasure to drink.

On the occasion of our 35th anniversary, the *Napa Valley Register* profiled Stu on August 10: The complete article can be found on our website, but here are some excerpts:

Stuart Smith discusses the life and times of Smith-Madrone

...As he recalled his early days, he reflected on the changes he's seen in the Valley. Driving around the property, he talked about spacing of vines -- when he arrived the usual was 12 feet by 8 feet, today it's 8 by 5. In 1971 everyone drove crawler tractors, today most use wheel tractors. The method of paying for grapes was different, too. Smith explained that the usual way then was to get part payment in the summer, part in the fall, but the final price was not determined until January.....

Grapes weren't the predominant crop until "somewhere in the '80s," he said. "Livestock was. They grew prunes, pears and walnuts. "There were no vineyard managers. Everyone farmed their own land, and some split their own (grape) stakes.....

Smith is a staunch advocate for riesling and makes about 1,000 cases of it annually. "Sometimes I feel like Sisyphus (who was condemned to push a large rock to the top of the mountain, only to have it fall back down)," he said. "It's hard to go against the trend, knowing that you're right." But riesling is becoming more popular today, and Smith said he understands why. "Some rieslings are not just among the finest white wines in the world, they are one of the finest wines in the world. Consumers in the 21st century are now embracing riesling." Most others were calling the wine Johannisberg riesling, but Smith wanted to drop the prefix. "We should not use the crutch of European names," he said. In 1983 he petitioned the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms for permission to "call it just riesling, but it was turned down." He fought for it and enlisted the assistance of Maynard Amerine, considered by many to be among the most influential people in American wine history, and eventually Smith's persistence paid off and his request was approved.

...another of his passions involves the Boy Scouts. Smith, who was an Eagle Scout himself while attending school in Santa Monica, was selected as Scoutmaster of Troop 1 in St. Helena in 2001. He recruits boys for the troop and tells parents, "If you send your boys to us, we'll teach them how to step forward from the crowd with the skills and knowledge to help people in an emergency, and they'll gain confidence (in themselves)."

That training paid off for the scouts of Troop 1 a little more than a year ago. While on a campout in Sequoia National Park, lightning struck the area and an assistant scoutmaster, Steven McCullagh, and a scout, Ryan Collins, were killed. Scouts later credited the training they received with helping to save the lives of others who also were struck by the lightning bolt.

Smith participates in numerous charitable events and in 1990 attended an auction that would change the nature of his charitable life. The livestock auctioneer "was terrible," Smith said. "I asked him if I could try ... and I started talking about the people (behind the wine). It worked and I've been doing it ever since. "Through that I was invited to (an auction) in Sioux City, Iowa, and I've been going back there every year, too. The people there are grateful, and it means a lot to those communities."

Smith-Madrone Winery celebrated its 35th anniversary virtually by launching a new website--- www.SmithMadroneis35.com. It details the winery's achievements, Charlie and Stu's backgrounds, the unusual history of the property and has a spot for people to reminisce about what 35 years as a vineyard-estate winery on top of Spring Mountain in the Napa Valley means in today's world. Each page of the website includes reminiscences, such as Stu's musing that "my brother Charlie and I not only drove all of the stakes around the winery but all of the stakes in the vineyard---a total of 19,000. We endured smashed thumbs, months of ongoing poison oak and heat exhaustion from picking up rocks. Fortunately for us, we loved it. I feel enormously fortunate to be able to do what it is that I love. It was a wonderful time, in essence the renaissance of the modern California wine business."

Smith-Madrone pioneered a number of 'firsts:' these include being one of the first wineries to dry-farm in Napa Valley, being a leader in the move to clarify varietal labeling by becoming the first American winery to use only 'Riesling' on its labels as of 1983 (preceding all other U.S. wineries by 15 years), winning 'Best Riesling In The World' at the Gault-Millau International Wine Championships in Europe in 1979 and being the first American winery to re-release winery-cellared Rieslings many years later (e.g. the 1997 vintage in 2004).

On December 29, 2006, *The San Francisco Chronicle Wine Section* assembled the best wines their weekly tasting panel had tasted from the year 2006. All of these wines had been awarded three or more stars. The article was called *The Chronicle's Wine Selections---The Stars of 2006*.

On March 23, 2006, the wine had been reviewed as follows:

THREE STARS 2002 Smith-Madrone Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$35) Who says California can't produce elegant, refined Cabernet? This medium-full-bodied wine isn't fat and ultra ripe, but rather restrained in the traditional Bordeaux style. There is plenty of black-cherry fruit wrapped in a blanket of cedar, tobacco, menthol and spice, and oak is there for texture rather than flavoring...Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon can cost \$75, \$100, \$150 per bottle -- or more -- depending on a number of factors, including image, scarcity, ageability, the celebrity of the owner or winemaker and, most significant, high scores from critics. Thankfully, a number of Napa producers sell fine Cabernet for less than \$50.