

The Opera House Gourmet International Wine of the Month Selection for August 2011

Rutherford Ranch Chardonnay 2009 and Cabernet Sauvignon 2008

Napa Valley, California

This month we continue to explore the wines of California. Some years, most of the wine we taste and consider for the wine club, will continually show well from a particular area of the world. This year, it seems as though everything we've tasted from California producers has struck a chord with us. Our August selection will be our third California choice for your enjoyment...and the year isn't over yet! We've chosen two more great examples of California's wines for our September and November wine selections.

Rutherford Ranch in Napa California is a name that is well known as a producer of organically grown and produced wines. The property is certified 100% organic by the strictest of standards of California. The winery is located on the Silverado Trail in the Rutherford District, known for its production of Cabernet Sauvignon. The Rutherford District is one of California's 14 AVA districts. Robert Parker has declared that the Rutherford District represents "the best value in Napa Valley". The philosophy of the vineyard is substance over pretense. They strive to produce great wines that will satisfy the customer and yet are affordable.

The Chardonnay constitutes the largest percentage of the harvest at 18% of production. Juice from parcels that are from both cool and warm micro-climates are gently pressed, placed in stainless steel tanks and then blended with juice that has spent time in barrel fermentation. The addition of the barrel fermented juice assures that the wine will have complexity and a richness. The 2009 Rutherford Chardonnay is 97% Chardonnay with 3% Muscat Cannelli. The resulting wine is great for sipping on a warm evening or pairs well with grilled salmon or sea bass with fresh herbs.

Awards: Best of Class, Judges Choice, San Francisco Chronicle competition. Robert Parker's Wine Advocate, 88 points – "excellent value" December 2010.

The Cabernet Sauvignon is smooth and supple. It is a blend of 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot and 2% Zinfandel. This vintage benefitted from a dry winter, severe spring frosts and heat spikes in summer. The resulting low yields led to a greater concentration of flavor. It spent 12 months in French and American oak. The wine is ruby colored with aromas of boysenberry, currant and earthy hints of forest floor. It is full bodied with rich tannins. This well balanced wine will age well for 2 – 5 years. Juice from several microclimates within Napa Valley allow for diversity in blending and greater complexity.

"This Cabernet Sauvignon is as soft as velvet with a clean bite of acidity and the cherry and blackberry jam flavors are evenly paired with a smoky sweet oak".

Awards: 87 points Wine Enthusiast.