

# BENZIGER

FAMILY WINERY

2003  
**BENZIGER**  
**CHARDONNAY**  
*Ricci Vineyards*  
**Los Carneros**

**VINEYARD:** The Ricci family vineyard enjoys a prime location in the southern part of Carneros, close to the San Pablo Bay. The family has extensive experience farming this region that has evolved from graze and orchard land to one of the premier Chardonnay appellations in the world. Carneros' maritime-influenced climate, intensified by the vineyard's proximity to the bay -- contributes to a longer time on the vine for the grapes, referred to as "hang-time". The extended hang-time—which the Carneros region is known for—produces ripe, fully matured and intense flavors in the final wine.

**VINIFICATION:** The whole cluster grapes were quickly pressed to tank to settle, then cold barrel fermented to retain the flavors of Ricci Vineyard in the wine. The wine underwent 90% malolactic fermentation and was aged in French oak for 10 months to impart roundness and complexity. After minimal fining the wine was bottled in August of 2004. Alcohol: 13.9%, Total Acidity .68, pH 3.54, Residual Sugar .07%. 576 cases produced.

**VINTAGE:** The season began on a wet note - we got almost a year's average rainfall in December 2002 – but an unseasonably warm spring gave us an early bud break in March. The vines began to grow and the weather turned cold and wet again in April; depending on location we had rain between 20 to 26 days of the month. This cool overcast weather virtually stopped vine growth and filled the soil with water. As it turned out, April rains and soil moisture ended up being the big story of 2003. Warm weather in May got things going again with explosive growth, then June cooled off and it became apparent that it was going to be a late harvest. There were rumblings about similarities with 1998, but with record heat in July, the situation looked hopeful. August cooled some but brought a tropical weather pattern and the fear of rain. The weather warmed in late September and it became a challenge to control

VINTAGE  
**2003**

PRICE  
**\$25**

RELEASE DATE  
**April 2005**

AVAILABILITY  
**Winery only**

APPELLATION  
**Los Carneros**

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sugars while waiting for flavor maturity. Once harvest began in mid-September, but thanks to a cooling trend, we were able to bring in fruit with great ripeness and maturity through October. 2003 was unique and, weather-wise, all over the board. But we got what we needed at critical times and most varietals fared beautifully.

**TASTING NOTES:** This wine displays the intensity, complexity, and length Carneros Chardonnay--at its best--is known for. It is supple and full bodied, yet crisp and very long on the palate, with a persistent aftertaste. It tastes of banana, roasted nut, toasted oak, peach, lemon, and pineapple. Enjoy this wine with scallops in a white wine, mushroom, or curry sauce; crab quiche; soy-and-ginger basted grilled tuna; or clams in yellow bean sauce.

Terry Nolan, Winemaker