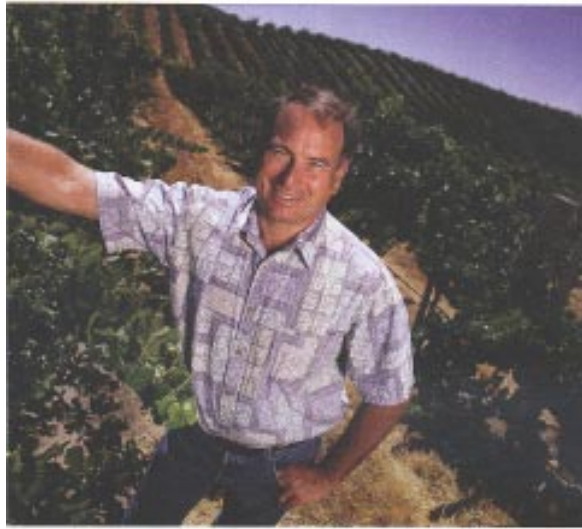


**NEW WINES  
NEW FACES**

## *Michaud Finds Success Close to Home*



Michael Michaud, former winemaker for California's Chalone Vineyard, started his own label nearby and is focusing on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah.

**M**ichael Michaud knew a good deal when he saw it. While working as winemaker at Chalone Vineyard in the later 1970s, Michaud (pronounced mee-SHOH) lived in Soledad, Calif., which he described as a start community—no amenities, no theaters and no interesting restaurants. Even on calm days, he said, the wine howls through this Monterey County town.

One day, he discovered a property for sale, located about 3 miles from Chalone Vineyard. It came with an old house, 10 acres of land and an owner willing to finance its purchase. Best of all, the land sold for \$350 an acre. "That was quite a deal," said Michaud, now 50, who happily moved into the house away from Soledad and closer to work.

Michaud and his wife, Carol Hastings Michaud, an executive with wine importer Chambers & Chambers, slowly added new parcels to

their property. "It's been financed paycheck to paycheck," said Michaud. As money allowed, they planted grapes, which they began selling in the early 1990s.

Today, they own 262 acres in vines and have invested roughly \$2 million in addition to their "sweat equity."

Michaud Vineyard's emphasis is on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. All the wines will be made with estate-grown fruit, said Michaud, and he doesn't intend to expand production beyond 7,000 cases. "I do all of the winemaking and most of the farming myself," he said. "I want to keep it small, because I derive enjoyment from getting my hands dirty and staying directly involved."

Michaud is renting space from Testarossa, in Santa Clara Valley, until he can afford to build a modest winery. "As it is now, I'm kind of a road warrior, commuting between here, there and every-

where," he said. His 1998 vintage was made in Napa Valley—a five-hour drive from his vineyard.

Michaud left Chalone at the end of 1997, after spending 19 years there, 16 of those as winemaker and general manager, working closely with Chalone's visionary founder, the late Richard Graff. His experience making Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from this remote area in San Benito County gave him a leg up on knowing what to expect from the grapes and wines. Michaud Vineyard is on similar terrain as Chalone, but is a shade cooler, he said, and typically he harvests two weeks after Chalone.

Michaud isn't trying to venture far from the style of wines he made at Chalone. "Without being trite, I'm aiming for styles modeled after French wines," he said, citing Rhone reds and Burgundies as the wines he admires most.

Michaud started his label with a tiny lot from the 1997 vintage. His current release is a refreshingly lively 1999 Chardonnay (\$45, 88 points, 2,000 cases), which shares the flinty intensity of his Chardonnays at Chalone.

"I want to make wines that people really like to drink, as opposed to monsters," said Michaud. The 1999 Chardonnay is evidence that he's well on the way to achieving his goals.

—James Laube

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