

Introducing Michaud Vineyard

Michael Michaud and Carol Hastings Michaud established Michaud Vineyard (winery) in 1997, with a goal of producing inviting and pleasurable world-class wines that communicate the unique and special qualities of the Chalone Appellation.

The People

The brand is new, but Michael and Carol are no strangers to the wine business.

After earning a BS in Chemistry and (95% of) an enology and viticulture degree from U.C. Davis, Michael got his feet and most of the rest of him wet via 19 years experience in winegrowing and winemaking at Chalone Vineyard and on his estate near the Chalone Vineyard ranch. In January of 1998, he left Chalone to pursue the further development of the family owned vineyard full-time.

Michael has established a long track record of critically acclaimed wines. On numerous occasions Chalone wines that he has made have received "Wine Spectator Selection" or "Cellar Selection" status, frequently scoring over 90 points. Chalone



Michaud Vineyard

Chardonnays have also been featured in James Laube's book "Great Chardonnays of California." Robert Parker has written favorably of the Chalone wines, especially those made since 1990.

Carol Hastings Michaud, Michael's wife and co-proprietor of Michaud Vineyard brings over 18 years of sales and marketing experience to the company. Carol is a partner and Vice President of Sales & Marketing for Chambers and Chambers, a distributor of ultra premium imported and domestic wines in California and Hawaii.

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Fast facts about Michaud Vineyard:

- Appellation:**
*Chalone,
Monterey County, California*
- Vineyard established:**
1981
- Vineyard elevation:**
1500 ft
- Soil composition:**
*decomposed granite-clay loam,
varied limestone and other
mineral deposits*
- Varietals planted:**
*Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc,
Pinot Noir, Sangiovese,
Marsanne, Syrah*
- Average rainfall:**
10-12 inches
- Winery founded:**
1997
- Cases produced:**
2000
- Wines released:**
Chardonnay
- Vineyard sources:**
100% estate
- Wanda's pet peeve:**
disrespectful coyotes

Michaud Vineyard in *Wine Spectator*

New Wines, New Faces: Finding Success Close to Home

Published: November 30, 2001

By James Laube

Michael Michaud knew a good deal when he saw it. While working as winemaker at Chalone Vineyard in the late 1970s, Michaud (pronounced mee-SHOH) lived in Soledad, Calif., which he described as a stark community — no amenities, no theaters and no interesting restaurants. Even on calm days, he said, the wind 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 (the winds of) Soledad and closer to work. "It was quiet — a lot of animals (rugged beauty) and not much traffic."

In the next decade, Michaud and his wife, Carol Hastings Michaud, an executive with wine importers Chambers & Chambers, slowly added new parcels to their property. "It's been financed paycheck to paycheck," said Michaud. As money allowed, they planted grapes, and they began selling the

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What's so special about the Michaud Ranch and the Chalone Appellation?

Why do I continue this crazy commute?

I was taken with this place the moment I saw it back in 1979. It was wild, unspoiled; it said HOME.

I was a redwood forest person at heart, having lived in several Marin communities and having taken many wonderful day hikes on Mount Tamalpais. This little 10-acre parcel and a shack were located in the midst of a Chapparal wilderness adjacent to the Pinnacles National Monument. Tall chamise bushes, ceanothus, buckbrush, coast live oaks and deciduous blue oaks along with hundreds of different wild flowers are the main representatives of the plant world. Instead of redwoods and ferns, the area was more akin to the brushland ecology of Griffith Park, which bordered my backyard as a child, growing up in the Hollywood Hills. I spent many happy days hiking there as a kid.

From the quaintly decrepit cabin (that Carol hopes will be struck by lightning so we can build a new one) you can see few structures and hear few sounds. It is only the sound of birds, animals and the breeze in the trees and bushes that keep you company. At this 1500' elevation in the Gabilan Mountains, the air is clear and fresh from nearby Monterey Bay. Water is scarce, the sunlight is intense, the wildlife is plentiful. From hummingbirds and roadrunners to Golden eagles and wild turkeys, horned toads and rattlesnakes to bobcats, mountain lions and wild boar. Wanda, our Australian Shepherd, has a personal mission to keep disrespectful coyotes, the marauding wild boar and the invisible things that live in every culvert pipe at bay.

For me the most amazing aspect of this place is its peace and serenity.

Formed some 28 million years ago, the Pinnacles, sitting astride the San Andreas Fault, dominate the eastern skyline. Earthquakes are a common occurrence (we're about 40 miles north of Parkfield, earthquake capital of California) and it's so quiet that you can hear them before, during and after they rumble through. This is a land of extremes, daily temperature fluctuations of 60°F in a day, 100°F (17°F-117°F) in a year. Dessicating, low summer humidity of 20-30% gives way to night fogs. Annual rainfall averages only 10-12," but occasionally "wet" winters with slightly more than 20" turn the baby powder dry

soil into treacherous tractor eating swamps disguised as solid ground by a meager 1-2" crust of ground cover.

Incredible sunsets are an almost daily event and the nighttime sky is filled with the Milky Way and so many stars that constellations are challenging to find. Our son Jamie is learning to identify the constellations here. He is amazed at how much more visible stars are here than in the Bay area.

The soil here, which imparts a wonderful mineral quality to the wine, is made from the decomposition of its granite foundation and limestone left from its many million year underwater trip from Hawaii. It is seasoned with odd minerals and rocks, which spewed out from Mount Chalone, when it erupted millions of years ago.



Pinnacles National Monument

All these things combine to make this rare place of fewer than one inhabitant per 10 square miles, two hours south from our Woodside home, a special place to grow grapes and make wine. The wines are full of character and elegant with layers of flavors and characteristics truly reminiscent of Burgundy. Indeed this small appellation has a grape growing history that goes back over a hundred years. Because of the golden color of the hills in summer and fall and the wonderful and unique wines that come from this appellation, it could be called California's "Cote D' Or".

This is an incredibly difficult place in which to operate. There were no electricity, phones or other infrastructure upon which we all depend, until we built our own. Well before the "power

crisis" daily electricity outages were and are commonplace. The Post Office has declined repeated requests to deliver the mail. The phone line, which I hung on a barbed wire fence in 1986, consists of a wire with about a hundred splices and is a mile and a half long. It goes out at least once every couple of months (usually a problem in Pac Bell's Soledad C.O. Before the telephone line (B. T.) I got to choose between a radiotelephone with a three minute limit ("50-04 you're way over your limit," the Parrot lady (night operator) used to say) and a public telephone hung on the wall of the ranger station at the Pinnacles. On the one hand everyone in the Salinas Valley was privy to your conversation. On the other, your car might get hijacked by a band of raccoons while you're standing in the rain talking on the only phone for 15 or 20 miles. Supplies have to be hauled from Soledad, 12 miles away, Salinas, 30 miles or the Bay area.

On top of all that there are mysterious anti-technological forces (which we refer to as the spirit of a past Indian chief who dislikes having his rest disturbed), which cause all manner of havoc in daily operations. This year it attacked the forklifts during harvest, crippling one by a swift and fatal blow to the hydraulic pump and wounding a replacement brought over by our neighbor by disabling the fuel solenoid. We got around that one with a piece of baling wire-you'd be surprised what you can fix with baling wire and Duct tape!

The southern end of my biweekly commute is often punctuated by cruising bobcats or merging wild turkeys or quail (we all have our crosses to bear) but these delays are much easier to indulge than the Hwy 101 parking lot from Morgan Hill to San Jose.

But it's all worth it. Each year's new crop begins as buds break, thrives under daily care and is harvested in the fall. It takes with it a memory of the place and the season it grew in. These memories become the vintage variations in flavor. We hope that we can share a little of this with you.

Michael Michaud

Great places to enjoy Michaud Vineyard wine

Here's a sampling of some of our favorite places around the U.S. to enjoy Michaud Vineyard wines.

Arizona

Cowboy Ciao, Scottsdale
Tarbells, Phoenix
Bistro Zin, Tucson
Sportsmans, Phoenix

California

Northern

Lodge at Pebble Beach, Pebble Beach
Prima, Walnut Creek
Farallon, San Francisco
Bistro Elan, Palo Alto

California

Southern

Vivace at the Four Seasons, Carlsbad
Fish Market, San Diego
El Dorado Country Club, Indian Wells

Florida

Nemo, Miami Beach
Norwood, New Smyrna Beach
Syrah, Inc., Naples
Voila, Melbourne

Georgia

Elizabeth's on 37th, Savannah
Aria, Atlanta
Pano & Paul, Atlanta
Murphy's, Atlanta

Hawaii

Grand Wailea Resort & Spa, Maui
Four Seasons Resort Hualalai, Big Island
Halekulani Hotel, Oahu
Michael's at the Colony Surf, Oahu

Illinois

Naha, Chicago
Ambria, Chicago
North Pond Cafe, Chicago
Rushmore, Chicago

Massachusetts

Oyster Cabin, Oxbridge
Aspasia, Cambridge
Adams Inn, Quincy
Salts, Cambridge

Minnesota

Dakota Bar and Grill, St. Paul
The Oceanaire, Minneapolis
Napa Valley Grille, Bloomington
WA Frost, St. Paul

New Jersey

Serenade, Chatham
Soho on George Street, New Brunswick
Burkes Tavern, Sparta

New York

Moran's, New York City
Picholine, New York City
Cello, New York City

Ohio

Giovanni's, Beachwood
Salmon Dave's, Rocky River
Heritage Restaurant, Cincinnati
Bluepoint, Cleveland
Barcelona, Columbus

South Carolina

Old Fort Pub, Hilton Head
Tavern on the Creek, Hilton Head
Rosa Linda's, Myrtle Beach
Victor's, Florence

Texas

Damians Cucina Italiana, Houston
Po-Go's, Dallas
Club Giraud, San Antonio
Emilia's, Austin

Washington

Filberto's, Seattle
Wild Ginger, Seattle
Waterfront, Seattle

Michaud Vineyard in *Wine Spectator*

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grapes in the early '90s. Today, they own 262 acres (of land and have developed 35 acres of vineyard)...

Michaud Vineyard's emphasis is on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah, with small amounts of Sangiovese, Marsanne and Pinot Blanc, and there are plans to add Roussanne and Black Muscat. 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. (That is my passion)."

Michaud sells a portion of his grapes to Testarossa, in Santa Clara Valley, and is renting space from that winery until he can afford to build a modest winery on his property. "As

it is now, I'm kind of a road warrior, commuting between here, there and everywhere," he said. His 1998 vintage was made in Napa Valley — a five-hour drive from his vineyard, which he said, is too far.

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 about two weeks after Chalone picks. The cooler site is also vulnerable to spring frosts, he said, which can be devastating.

Because his vineyard is so similar to Chalone's, 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 Rhône reds and red and white Burgundies as the styles of wines he admires most, with multiple layers of flavor, good acidity, restraint and elegance.

Michaud's first commercial release is a refreshingly lively 1998 Chardonnay (\$45, 88 points, 1,650 cases), which shares the flinty intensity of his Chardonnays at Chalone.

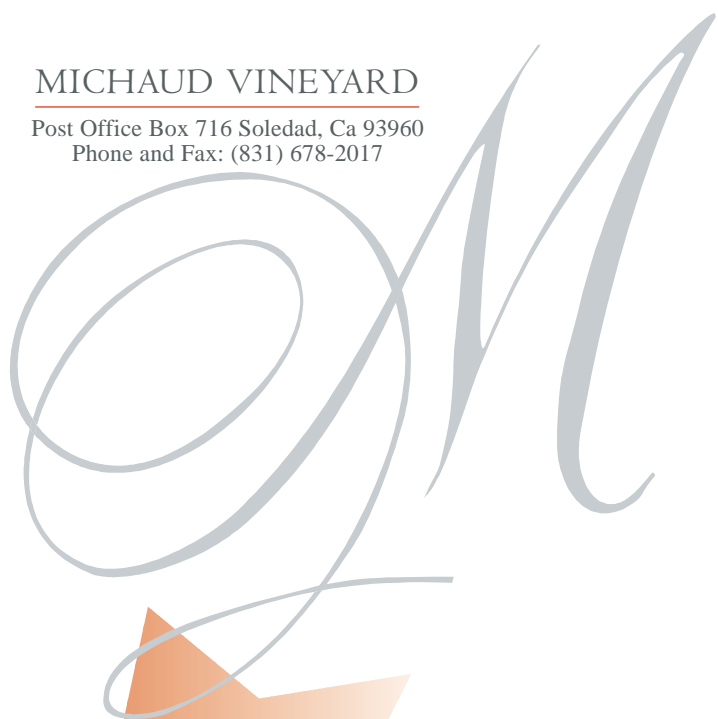
"I want to make wines that people really like to drink, as opposed to monsters," said Michaud. The 1998 Chardonnay is evidence that he's well on the way to achieving his goals.

M

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Introducing Michaud Vineyard

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The Vineyard

The Vineyard is located northwest of Chalone Vineyard, adjacent to the West Pinnacles National Monument, 12 miles east of the town of Soledad, in Monterey County, California.

Although first planted in 1981, Michaud's Vineyard's first significant crop was harvested in 1990. The grapes were sold to Chalone from 1990-1994, for use in the prestigious reserve program, then, starting in 1995, to Testarossa Vineyards. Planted varietals now include Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir, Sangiovese, Marsanne and Syrah.

The Winery

The Michaud Vineyard brand was founded in 1997 with the production of 160 cases of Chardonnay. The 1999 Chardonnay, just released has grown to almost 2,000 cases. Only Chardonnay has been released thus far. The 2000 vintage of Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Sangiovese will be released in the Spring/Fall of 2002, to be determined post bottling. The winery will remain very small, as the wines are and will continue to be made exclusively from estate grown grapes.

The Wine

The winemaking philosophy is to produce (ultra premium) wines that we would like to drink, from our favorite grape varieties, historically grown in the Burgundy and Rhone regions of France and Tuscany, Italy. Implicit in this approach is that the wines will aspire to the highest quality level, that the intriguing character of the place and its unique terroir will be communicated through the wine and, most practically, each glass will evoke the desire to have another. Moderation acknowledged but not withstanding. *M*