

Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s

The Wine Advocate

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RUDD ESTATE

2001	CHARDONNAY BACIGALUPI VINEYARD	RUSSIAN RIVER	(not yet det., rel. date 10/03)	WHITE	(89-91)
2000	CHARDONNAY BACIGALUPI VINEYARD	RUSSIAN RIVER	(\$50.00)	WHITE	89
1999	CHARDONNAY BACIGALUPI VINEYARD	RUSSIAN RIVER	(\$50.00)	WHITE	88
2000	JERICHO CANYON VYD. PROPRIETARY RED WINE	NAPA	(not yet det., rel. date 3/03)	RED	(90-92)
1999	JERICHO CANYON VYD. PROPRIETARY RED WINE	NAPA	(\$100.00)	RED	92
2001	OAKVILLE ESTATE PROPRIETARY RED WINE	NAPA	(not yet det., rel. date 9/04)	RED	(94-96)
2000	OAKVILLE ESTATE PROPRIETARY RED WINE	NAPA	(not yet det., rel. date 9/03)	RED	(92-94)
2001	SAUVIGNON BLANC	NAPA	(\$28.00)	WHITE	88
2000	SAUVIGNON BLANC	NAPA	(\$28.00)	WHITE	85

After well-known winemaker David Ramey left Rudd Estate to pursue his own label, Rudd's proprietor hired the brilliant Charles Thomas, formerly of Robert Mondavi and Jackson Family Farms. Hence the 2001s will be finished by Charles Thomas, but the wines were actually vinified by Ramey. Fortunately for wine enthusiasts, there is little philosophical difference between the two men's approach to winemaking ... the objective of both is greatness.

Rudd Estate, which is superbly located at the corner of the Oakville Crossroads and Silverado Trail, has 40 acres under vine, all of it beginning to come into production. The 2000 Sauvignon Blanc (1,500 cases) is a crisp, fresh, tart offering with notes of minerals, figs, flint, and grapefruit. Although slightly austere and acidic, it will provide refreshing drinking over the next several years. The excellent 2001 Sauvignon Blanc (2,700 cases) possesses complex aromatics of Thai lemon grass, figs, melons, and earth. Elegant, fresh, and medium-bodied, with more flavor and texture than the 2000, it will drink well for 2-3 years.

Rudd produces approximately 1,000 cases of Chardonnay from the Russian River vineyard of Bacigalupi. It receives full malolactic fermentation, aging in French oak, and minimal clarification at bottling. The 1999 Chardonnay Bacigalupi Vineyard exhibits delicate yet flavorful citrus oil notes intermixed with apple blossom and mineral scents. Medium-bodied, delicate, subtle, and finely etched, it will provide lovely drinking over the next 4-5 years. The 2000 Chardonnay Bacigalupi Vineyard offers a sweeter, fleshier palate and more texture than the 1999, but not the delineation or elegance. If you prefer finesse and grace, drink the 1999; if readers want more fruit and obvious charm, choose the 2000. The finest effort of this trio is the 2001 Chardonnay Bacigalupi Vineyard. It boasts a great mouthfeel, a leesy, sweet honeyed citrus nose with smoke, hazelnut, and ripe tropical fruit, and more weight, delineation, and length than its two predecessors. It should drink well for 3-4 years.

The red wine offerings include the Jericho Canyon Vineyard and a

blend from Oakville Estate. There are 1,600 cases of the 1999 Jericho Canyon Vineyard Proprietary Red. A blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and the rest Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, it boasts both an impressive opaque purple color and bouquet of *crème de cassis*, roasted coffee, melted chocolate, toasty oak, licorice, and creosote. Full-bodied, thick, and rich, with brooding but well-integrated tannin under all the flesh and density, it will undoubtedly firm up (particularly in a cold cellar), and last for 15+ years. The 2000 Jericho Canyon Vineyard Proprietary Red (a 2,500-case blend of 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 17% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot) is atypically full-bodied and powerful for the vintage. While it may not possess the complexity of the 1999, it offers copious quantities of black fruits, licorice, and coffee. Dense and supple, with sweet tannin and a long finish, it should drink well for 12-15 years.

The Oakville Estate Proprietary Red, primarily Cabernet Sauvignon, is a powerful example reminiscent of Harlan Estate's Cabernet. There are 1,200 cases of the 2000 Oakville Estate Proprietary Red (86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Cabernet Franc, and 5% Petit Verdot). It boasts a saturated purple color along with gorgeous aromatics of black fruits, new oak, sweet earth, truffles, asphalt, and barbecue spices. With sweet tannin, an opulent texture, and a long, concentrated finish revealing hints of espresso and vanilla, it is a sexy Cabernet to enjoy now and over the next 12-13 years. Even more remarkable, the 2001 Oakville Estate Proprietary Red (96% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Petit Verdot, and 2% Malbec) exhibits an opaque to the rim black/purple color in addition to a smoky, sweet fudge, espresso, and *crème de cassis*-scented bouquet. Huge, dense, powerful flavors ooze with glycerin and extract. The finish reveals beautifully integrated tannin, acidity, and alcohol. This is a stunning effort from what is obviously a magnificent vintage for North Coast Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Anticipated maturity: 2006-2020. Tel. (707) 944-8577; Fax (707) 944-2823