



## THE “ANDES EFFECT” ON TWO STYLES OF CHARDONNAY

Viña Cousiño-Macul pioneered the cultivation of Chardonnay in Chile. Their vines were originally established in the Maipo Valley from cuttings brought back from France’s Burgundy region in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Based on its lengthy experience in growing and producing Chardonnay in Chile, Cousiño-Macul has recently developed new sites at Buin that are perfectly suited to Chardonnay.

Buin is located in the Alto-Maipo, the area of the Maipo Valley closest to the Andes where certain sites benefit from the “Andes Effect”. This refers to the cooling mountain air that descends during the evenings to create a wide range in daily temperature readings. Typically, during the growing season the daytime high of 90F will see the evening temperature drop to 50F. Because of the Andes Effect, Buin Chardonnay preserves unusually crisp acidity when the grapes are fully mature, so the resulting wine is naturally full-flavored and structurally balanced.

Secondly, the well-drained alluvial and granitic soils of the Alto-Maipo give Buin Chardonnay a special character, again due to proximity to the Andes and also to the Maipo River. As the snow melts in the Andes, the Maipo River fills and makes its way over rocks and gypsum becoming rich in calcium. This calcium-rich water that eventually feeds the vineyards is ideal for Chardonnay.

When the Buin Estate vineyards were being developed, the Cousiños planted Chardonnay on 23 hectares in an area that provided the maximum cooling effect in combination with these special soils. What also sets Cousiño’s Buin Estate Chardonnay apart from others grown in Chile is that the new vineyards are densely planted and under drip irrigation, both of which control yields by stressing each vine. Another important difference is that Cousiño Chardonnay vines planted at the Buin Estate come entirely from an in-house massal selection program that has not only improved the quality of the vines over time, but also maintains the genetic integrity of those cuttings introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Two distinct styles of Chardonnay are made by Cousiño-Macul from its Buin Estate vineyard. For the 2003 Antiguas Reservas Chardonnay, the cellar team combined 55% barrel fermented Chardonnay with 45% tank fermented which added bright, assertive fruit. To further emphasize the wine’s fruit character and to retain the wine’s natural acidity, only 14% of the final blend was put through malo-lactic fermentation. This partial malo-lactic component added a subtle hint of butter. The barrel fermented fraction was aged in French oak for 7 months.

The other is the 2004 Estate Chardonnay, a wine showcasing Chardonnay’s unadorned personality. It is entirely tank fermented and did not undergo malo-lactic. It is a vivacious style of fruit-filled, no-wood Chardonnay which is gracefully balanced by refreshing acidity.