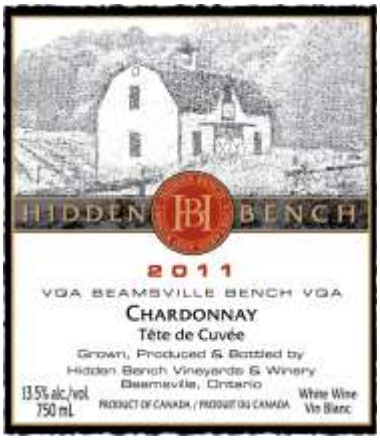
2011 CHARDONNAY TÊTE DE CUVÉE

WINEMAKING DATA

Harvest Dates: 5th – 13th of October, 2011
Brix at harvest: 21.6 – 22.6
Blend and grape source: 100% organically grown estate Chardonnay from the Locust Lane and Rosomel Vineyards
Alcohol: 13.5% **pH:** 3.32
Residual Sugar: 1.77g/L **T.A**. 5.55g/L
Bottling Date: 4th of April, 2013
Oak regime: 100% French Oak: 25% new, 37.5% 2nd fill, 37.5% 3rd fill for the 1st 11 months, stainless steel barrels and neutral oak for a further 5 months
Time in barrel: 16 months
Filtered



TERROIR SERIES
$45.00

GOLD MEDAL -NATIONAL WINE AWARDS CANADA 2014

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

The vines for the 2011 Tête de Cuvée Chardonnay were meticulously maintained to showcase our Beamsville Bench *terroir*. All grape bunches were exposed to sunlight at fruit set by completely removing leaves on the East side and partially on the West side of the canopy to maximize ripening. Green harvesting – the removal of under-ripe bunches – was performed at the first sign of colour change in berries from green to gold. This is known as *véraison*. A meager 32.5hL per hectare was harvested (2 tons per acre) in 2011. Vine age ranges from 12 – 35 years.

All fruit was handpicked, sorted and whole bunch pressed to yield the most pure juice. After cold settling for 24 hours, the juice was racked, warmed and transferred to barrel. The wine was fermented with indigenous yeasts reaching a peak of 22˚C. Malolactic fermentation occurred naturally and all barrels were stirred weekly during fermentation only.

TASTING

This classic cool climate Chardonnay shows a rich powerful nose with roasted hazelnut and toasty notes, giving way to a rich full mineral palate with stone-fruit, beeswax and quince marmalade. The persistent creamy finish has very good length, while the acidity supports the lanolin-like weight and texture of this wine. Ready to drink now this Chardonnay will reward those who have the patience to age it carefully for a few years.

THE GROWING SEASON

2011 could be characterized as a year of contrasts! The start to the growing season was slow with cool and wet conditions (75mm above average rainfall in April and May) experienced in early Spring until mid-June. This was followed by an extended period of warm and dry weather from mid June until the end of September with above average temperatures and below average precipitation. The harvest period was challenging as a number of unpredictable weather systems gave us significant above average precipitation from September 26th through October 5th.

Fortunately we had already picked a significant portion of our younger vines and were able to let the older vine fruit hang until after this rainy period due to the lack of breakdown. Overall the growing season ended up being fairly normal for our cool-climate viticulture area with 1557 Degree days, a harvest period that ran from September 19th to November 7th, and a lower than forecast yield averaging under 2 tonnes /acre or approximately 30 Hl /hectare of physiological and sugar ripe fruit.

The saving grace of the vintage for Hidden Bench was the meticulous vineyard, canopy and yield management of our vineyard team coupled with timely (read lucky!!!) picking decisions. Every decision was thoroughly debated and considered by the Hidden Bench vineyard and winemaking team. Despite numerous challenges, we were able to bring in our handpicked fruit at optimum ripeness and our extensive "triage" or sorting of the harvested fruit has yielded some excellent wines.

The 2011 wines show wonderful potential and should be viewed as typical examples of *terroir* driven, cool climate wines with elegance, higher acids and lower alcohols, in other words, age-worthy, balanced and easy to pair with your favourite foods.