

KOEPPPEL ON WINE



May 4, 2006



Nickel & Nickel **Searby Vineyard Chardonnay 2004** 100% Chardonnay Russian River Valley, Sonoma County, California Excellent

Ten months in French oak barrels, 50 percent new and the rest once-used, give this sumptuous but not overpowering chardonnay a vivid sheen of spice and a firm framework. I don't see how anyone could want a chardonnay with any more richness and depth (depth of fruit and spice and minerals) than this has, even without going through malolactic fermentation, the natural chemical process by which tart malic (apple-like) acid is transformed in the barrel to creamy lactic (milk-like) acid. The chief character here lies in the embodiment of purity, intensity and authenticity. That sense of vibrancy and resonance, of power and elegance come from the grapes and the vineyard and thoughtful winemaking. We drank this with a recipe – in our ever-expanding search for new dishes – from *Charlie Trotter Cooks at Home* (Ten Speed Press, 2000), the Cilantro-Crusted Tuna Loin with Bok Choy and Lemon-Sesame Vinaigrette, an incredibly easy dish with spectacular results. I think we cleaned our plates and finished off the wine that night.