

NEYERS VINEYARDS

2006 Chardonnay ‘El Novillero’ – In his fascinating new book, [The Science of Wine](#), British writer Jamie Goode interviews the controversial Loire Valley winemaker Nicolas Joly about the longstanding practice of fermenting wine by adding a laboratory cultured yeast strain. Joly remarks: *“Adding yeast is absurd. Natural yeast is marked by the subtleties of the year. If you have added yeast, you have lost something of that year.”*

Joly’s approach to the use of indigenous wild yeast is an important element in traditional winemaking in France, and it’s the same approach we’ve practiced here at Neyers Vineyards since we began making Chardonnay, in 1993. In fact, we use indigenous wild yeast to ferment all of our wines. They give the wine not only a sense of the year but also a sense of the place where the grapes are grown. Trapped in the waxy surface coating of the grapes called *bloom*, these wild yeasts add flavor, complexity and texture to the wines while converting the grape’s sugar to alcohol. They extend the fermentation time, thus adding an element of risk to the process, but the outcome can’t be duplicated with laboratory-designed yeast. Buttery richness and a spicy mineral-like complexity are the key components in this wine from the Donnell Family’s vineyard, southwest of the town of Sonoma in the hills overlooking San Francisco Bay.

