

pressdemo.com

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.pressdemo.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[<<Back](#)

Article published - Apr 15, 2008

Pope to be honored with Sonoma wine Dutton Ranch chardonnay on the wine list at White House dinner

By SHADI RAHIMI
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

A Sonoma County chardonnay will be served at a White House dinner Wednesday honoring Pope Benedict XVI's first visit to the United States as pope.

The Sebastiani Vineyards and Winery's rich, oak-aged 2005 Dutton Ranch Chardonnay has been selected by the White House to be served the evening of the papal visit Wednesday, which is also the pope's 81st birthday.

"It's a very big honor," said Mary Ann Sebastiani Cuneo, president and CEO of the Sonoma winery.

The White House has said the pope won't be able to attend the dinner, a Bavarian feast in honor of his German heritage, the Associated Press reported.

President Bush will welcome the pope in a morning ceremony Wednesday on the South Lawn before an estimated 9,000 to 12,000 people, followed by a meeting in the Oval Office, according to the schedule posted on the White House Web site.

Later that evening, Bush and his wife, Laura, will host a dinner for Catholic leaders in the East Room of The White House, where the 2005 Dutton Ranch Chardonnay will be among the wines served.

It's not the first time that wine from the century-old family vineyard at 389 Fourth Street East in Sonoma has been served at the White House, said Richard Cuneo, chairman of the winery's board.

A specially bottled pinot noir and a green Hungarian varietal, a dry wine that "has since lost its favor in the public," were served during Richard M. Nixon's 1972 inauguration, he said. And "Nancy Reagan liked our variety of gewurztraminer, a bit of a sweet wine we don't make anymore," he said.

Mary Ann Cuneo has no idea what specific dishes the White House will be serving with the white wine, made with fruit from two of the vineyard's most prized blocks, Gerbeth and Rued Flats, from the Russian River Valley appellation. She isn't one to push wine-food pairings, and encourages people to drink whatever wine they prefer with whatever meal they enjoy.

But she concedes chardonnay is always nice with a "lighter fare," like chicken or lamb, though "some people like white wine with beef." But she doubts the White House would serve her chardonnay with red meat.

As for the pope, Cuneo said she sees him as "a very devout human being," but suspects "he's a good old time European person that likes wine with his meals. He's probably just like everybody else in that regard."

© www.pressdemo.com
