

Varietal Focus:

CHARDONNAY

Lance Cutler

WHEN IT COMES TO white wine, there is just one king, and it is Chardonnay. Dozens of other white wine varieties can charm the wine drinker. Riesling can be at least as complex, age as long and handle as many different styles as Chardonnay. Sauvignon Blanc can be crisper, show more dominant aromas and intense flavors. Any number of varieties, like Muscat, Gewürztraminer and Torrontes, can show brighter fruit and more perfumed character; but for the most part, when America drinks white wine, these days it drinks Chardonnay.

Chardonnay is grown in nearly every wine-producing region in the world, with more than 400,000 acres planted worldwide. It is relatively easy to grow and has the ability to adapt to different conditions. Because Chardonnay is an early-ripening variety, it can shine in areas with short growing seasons, like Burgundy and Oregon, as well as other cool climate locations around the world. It can thrive in almost all soil types, but has done most famously well in the chalk, marl and limestone of Burgundy.

Modern DNA research contends that Chardonnay, as we know it, was originally a cross of Pinot and the nearly extinct Gouais Blanc grape varieties. In California, **Wente Vineyards** developed a clone that was quickly adopted by many California growers and continues to be used today. As of now, 34 different clonal varieties of Chardonnay have been identified in France. These “Dijon clones” have recently been exported all over the world.

Chardonnay has a wide range of styles; and while it is definitely influenced by terroir, winemaking decisions seem to play an equal part stylistically in the finished product. Aside from determining when to pick (which affects the amount of acidity in the finished wine), winemakers make the call on whether or not to put the wine through malolactic fermentation and whether or not to use oak in the aging process. Malolactic fermentation, especially in conjunction with newer oak barrels, tends to create richer, bigger wines with a definite creamy character. Winemakers that eschew malolactic and use less new oak seek crisper, more mineral-driven wines. Winemakers are also split on whether to follow oxidative or reductive regimens in their production cycles, which affect whether or not they leave the wines on lees and how often they might stir those lees.

Editor's Note: In these varietal reviews published every six months, writer Lance Cutler, a winemaker for more than 30 years, focuses on a single grape variety through interviews with distinguished winemakers from distinctive regions that produce the selected varietal. To accomplish this, he travels to each region, meets the winemakers, visits some of the vineyards and conducts tastings with wines from the selected wineries. Winemakers talk about clones and rootstocks, soil types and how microclimates influence the variety. They also discuss what they are doing to best express their terroir, to determine which fermentation techniques lend themselves to which styles and to delineate the unique characteristics of each variety.

We have found these reviews to be of interest to winemakers around the country. We hope that discussions raised during these tastings will allow us to identify regional characteristics within each variety. Prior to this month's Chardonnay Varietal Focus, Cutler wrote about Syrah in February of 2011 and Pinot Noir in September of 2011 (search our magazine archive at winebusiness.com/wbm). In September, Zinfandel will be featured.

ANDREA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY



For this varietal focus we selected three recognized but distinctively different regions: Los Carneros and the Santa Lucia Highlands in California, and the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

We then selected three different winemakers from each of the three regions. We had the individual winemakers state their winemaking goals and give detailed accounts of their viticultural, fermentation and aging practices. We held a series of tastings where each winemaker was able to taste all nine of the wines. We offer each winemaker's impressions on each of the wines

to help readers assess how successfully individual winemakers were able to achieve their goals and which methods, in both the vineyard and at the winery, translated into the desired results.

The featured winemakers and/or owners include: **James Hall** of **Patz & Hall**, **Stéphane Vivier** of **HdV**, **Lee Hudson** of **Hudson Vineyards**, **Jeff Pisoni** of **Pisoni Vineyard**, **Dan Karlsen** of **Talbott Vineyards**, **Gianni Abate** of **Morgan**, **David Paige** of **Adelsheim Vineyard**, **Isabelle Meunier** of **Evening Land Vineyards** and **Erik Kramer** of **Domaine Serene**.



SCOTT SUMMERS

Los Carneros, CALIFORNIA

Los Carneros is an AVA established in 1983 located north of San Pablo Bay and stretching across the southern end of both Napa and Sonoma counties. The proximity to the cool fog and breezes generated by the Bay chills the climate in the area. Carneros helped pioneer cool-climate growing with varieties like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, which remain the two major varieties of the region. Elevations range from sea level to about 400 feet, and soils are predominantly clay and poorly drained. High afternoon winds are the norm for Carneros. Vineyards cover 8,000 acres planted primarily to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, much of which is used in sparkling wine production.

Patz & Hall

2008 Hyde Vineyard Chardonnay
(14.2% alc.) \$55

James Hall is the founder and winemaker for **Patz & Hall**. His father, an English professor, introduced Hall to fine wine during family trips to Europe in the late 1960s. After attending **UC Santa Cruz**, Hall transferred to **UC Davis** to study viticulture and enology. His first job was at **Felton Empire** in 1981 where he worked under renowned winemakers **Leo McCloskey** and **Patrick Mahaney**. He joined Napa Valley's **Flora Springs Winery** in 1983 where he met sales manager **Donald Patz**. By 1988 Hall and Patz teamed up with **Heather Patz** and **Anne Moses** to make the inaugural Patz & Hall Chardonnay.



According to Hall:

“Burgundy is my model. I want to express the rich complexity of California fruit, along with sur lie character and a bit of reduction. I’m looking for high acid, minerality and structure. We want to emphasize the terroir differences at our various vineyards. All of our Chardonnays go through malolactic, and I try to manage the new oak so that it is in balance with the wine.

“Hyde Vineyard is one of the great Carneros vineyards. Our block consists of Old Wente clones planted from 1997 to 1999 at 5-foot by 8-foot spacings in Haire loam soils. It’s pretty flat, around 65 feet above sea level. We use drip irrigation, and the block is traditionally farmed. When it comes time to pick, we test the grapes and watch the numbers, waiting for the acid to drop. I think tasting grapes for ripeness is overrated. We will typically pick this fruit in the high 23° to low 24° Brix range. Acids are around .8, and the pH is usually between 3.2 and 3.3.

“The grapes come to the winery and pass through a sorting table directly to the press, whole-cluster. We use a long press cycle, never going above 1.4 bar, and do very little tumbling to help with lees management. We make early press cuts, and all of our Chardonnay is made from free-run juice only. We add no water to the grapes nor do we de-alc the finished wine. We rarely add acid. Out of the press we add 40 to 50 ppm of SO₂. We chill the wine to 59° F then rack to a surge tank and mix to evenly distribute the lees. From there we go directly to barrel.

“All of our barrels are made from three-year, air-dried oak staves by either **François Frères** or **Seguin Moreau**, and we use 40 to 50 percent new oak. We run native yeast fermentations, which take seven to eight days to start. We stir the wine in barrel prior to fermentation or when adding nutrients, if necessary. The wine ferments at temperatures ranging from the high 60s to low 70s F in a refrigerated room. A three- to four-week fermentation is normal, but it can go longer. After fermentation, we rack to tanks to assemble the various lots and then go back to barrel on the lees.

“We have been adding malolactic culture to the barrels, but we are currently developing our own culture. We stir and top weekly through malolactic and then add 50 to 60 ppm SO₂. By May, we stop stirring and top every two weeks.



“In June or July we’ll rack to tank and do a light bentonite fining. If necessary, we occasionally do an isinglass fining as well. We refrigerate the wine to 30° F for four to six days. We rack the cold wine back to barrels filled with CO₂, where it sits for one month. We rack the wine for bottling and bottle without filtration. The wine ages for six to eight months prior to release.”

Winemakers’ Tasting Notes

Hall: *The wine is light and delicate with floral/citrus notes of orange and lemon peel. It has some lees character, and the oak doesn’t dominate. The wine is lean, not heavy. There is a long mineral, acidic finish, and it’s a bit hot.*

Hudson: *Delicious wine with a remarkable minerality. The grapes really shine through both in mouthfeel and structure.*

Vivier: *The wine has a nutty nose with some pronounced oak that should integrate well over time. The balance is delicate and restrained. There is good texture and minerality of grapefruit and stone fruits. The minerality is not salty; sometimes Hyde can be.*

Pisoni: *Aromatic and voluptuous without the tropical notes. It’s more floral. It is full-bodied, round with good acid.*

Abate: *It’s round with ripe apricot, floral character and some toasty oak.*

Karlsen: *This shows more ripeness than the HdV, so it has more viscosity and some more oak.*

Paige: *I get classic Carneros here with butterscotch in the nose and mouth, possibly from a bit of botrytis. The concentration carries the weight. It’s very authentic.*

Meunier: *There is a buttery nose with fruit that is pleasant. It is an “old school” style with sweetness on the palate and round, smooth buttery flavors. There is a nice acid minerality on the finish.*

Kramer: *I’m getting high-tone tropical aromas and honeydew. It’s weighty and rich with big sweetness and finishes just a bit hot.*

HdV

2008 Hyde Vineyard Chardonnay (14.5% alc.) \$60

Stéphane Vivier was born and raised in France, where his skills were cultivated in the vineyards and cellars of **Pommard**, **Meursault** and **Chassagne-Montrachet** and then expanded through his work in Switzerland, New Zealand and finally in the Sonoma Coast Appellation. He joined **HdV** in 2002 as winemaker. He brings with him skills in vineyard management and winemaking from around the world, with a strong background in biochemistry and advanced degrees in enology and viticulture. He tries to adapt and implement only the strictest viticultural and vinification techniques of France to the fruit of **Hyde Vineyard**.



According to Vivier:

“I focus on trying to have the wine express the vineyard, not the winemaking. The goal is to create the essence of the place in the bottle. Hyde Vineyard is all about stone fruit minerality with some green apple. We want restrained opulence and elegance, finesse and balance.

“The soil at Hyde Vineyard is shallow clay over hard clay pan. The soil is about 36 inches deep, and the subsoil is impenetrable clay. We get less rain than surrounding areas. Summer temperatures are cooled by its proximity to San Pablo Bay and by the fog. The vineyard is hilly with elevations between 25 to 300 feet. Vines are comprised of two selections: Calera (San Benito) planted in 1989 with 5.5-foot by 7-foot spacings and Old Wente planted in 1979 with 6-foot by 11-foot spacings. The Calera vines are cordon-pruned, which helps with balance. The Wente vines are cane-pruned, which allows us to keep the vines low to the ground. We farm some blocks organically and all the others sustainably, and we dry-farm whenever possible.

“We get slower maturation with our 20- to 30-year-old vines, in the range of 110 to 130 days’ hang time with slower acid drop. Our pickers sort in the vineyard. We put whole clusters directly to the press with 25 to 40 ppm SO₂ and press slowly, up to five hours and never above 1.2 bar. We do no tumbling for the first half of pressing nor do we separate free-run and press juice. The must settles in a tank for eight to 12 hours. Then it is racked and begins fermentation in stainless steel. For this wine, we used half native yeast and half inoculated, trying to build layers of complexity.

“After five days in tank, the wine is racked to barrel, usually between 10° and 20° Brix. We do no stirring (except for the last five days of fermentation). Fermentation lasts about one month then we inoculate for malolactic, which finishes some time between January and April. We top three times a week for the first three weeks, then bi-monthly after that. We inoculate with neutral malolactic bacteria, and post ml, we keep SO₂ levels between .4 and .6 molecular. The wine ages exclusively in François Frères barrels, using 20 percent new oak. We rack just before the new harvest, keeping the wine in stainless steel for three months. We bottle unfiltered and unfiltered and bottle age for 12 to 16 months before release.”



Winemakers’ Tasting Notes

Vivier: *There are aromas of citrus with grapefruit and a tiny amount of oak that is well integrated. There are ripe pear, pineapple and dry lemon flavors with a nice acid peak on the fresh, precise and lingering finish. The wine shows energy and definition. Good now and should age.*

Hudson: *This wine has great focus. An attractive key lime component in the nose shares strong minerality, and the wine finishes differently than it begins. It has smooth edges and is a great food wine. This would be the first bottle finished in a night.*

Hall: *This is fresh and age-worthy. It is lean and focused with some dusty citrus. There is drive and energy on the palate, good structure and tension with energetic acidic minerality. It’s a distinctive wine that shows both restraint and control.*

Meunier: *I really like this style. Plenty of high-tone fresh fruit on the nose and palate but it is light on its feet. It is lovely on the palate with a great acidic finish.*

Kramer: *This is aromatically pretty and restrained. I get a sensation of residual sugar in the mouth and a bit of phenolics, but the oak is balanced with good acidity.*

Paige: *This is lively on the palate, which I like. There is some spiced, cooked apple with bright acidity. I think it works well for what it is.*

Pisoni: *This wine has lean aromatics with some greener citrus fruit. It’s tight and focused on the palate. It shows a rocky minerality and is texturally driven although slightly reductive.*

Abate: *It’s chalky with pear notes. Crisp with plenty of acidity and a nice green grassy character.*

Karlsen: *Lean and mean in a Burgundian style. Good richness with zippy fruit and not a lot of oak. Good richness and mouthfeel. My favorite of the flight.*

Hudson Vineyards

2009 Carneros Chardonnay (14.9% alc.) \$60

Named the **Napa Valley Grapegrowers'** Grower of the year in 2008, **Lee Hudson** started in Texas. He calls himself a "Texan Francophile," and French is his first language. He studied horticulture at the **University of Arizona**. After graduation, he worked at **Domaine Dujac** in Morey St. Denis, Burgundy. He returned to the states and earned a degree in viticulture and enology at UC Davis. He purchased what is now **Hudson Vineyards** in 1981 and currently sells grapes to dozens of well known wineries.



According to Hudson:

"Our style is the classic Reserve style, and Montrachet is our model. We want that natural California fruit, and we want it to be big and creamy with a long finish from acidity. We want the wine to hang in your mouth, something that is big and bold with length and character.

"The grapes for this wine come from four different sites, and the grapes are all Heritage selections propagated from individual plants. The vines are cane-pruned, shoot-positioned and planted 4-feet by 8-feet. We reside at an

elevation of 300 feet with a south to southwest facing, and the soil is Haire loam. We irrigate and are sustainably farmed.

"All of our picking is done at night, and we pick in the 24° Brix range, but a key is that we look for golden (not green) fruit. We leaf the day before harvest and do very little sorting. Whole-clusters go to our two-ton press. We press to tanks, separating the free-run and press fractions. We also keep the different vineyard blocks separate. After six hours in tank, the juice is racked to barrel. We use native yeast and indigenous malolactic bacteria.

"We practice an oxidative regime, stirring weekly then bi-weekly and finally monthly. The stirring acts to fine out the harsh oak flavors. We use no SO₂ for the first 18 months. The wine ferments in 100 percent new François Frères barrels. The barrels are stored in a cave. After 18 to 20 months we rack the wine off of the lees and add SO₂. We assemble the various lots to our satisfaction and then bottle unfinned and unfiltered."

Winemakers' Tasting Notes

Hudson: *The wine is big and creamy with a long finish. The flavor is big in the mouth. It's a big, rich wine with character.*

Vivier: *Big and bold with great balance. There is lots of spice and oak present. The phenolics are very spicy. The wine is bold with minerality.*

Hall: *This is a wine of texture. There are lees notes, and the wine is dense with a caramelized quality, almost like caramel custard. It's kind of like a linebacker in a tutu, heavy and delicate at the same time.*

Pisoni: *The wine is big and seductive with great spiciness. It's broad on the palate, and the oak should integrate with time.*

Karlsen: *This wine is over-oaked. The wine isn't big enough to handle the amount of oak or the style, leaving it a bit thin and insipid.*

Abate: *Lots of oak. It's buttery and creamy with good acidity and minerality; but in the end, it is an oak-driven wine.*

Paige: *This is an oakier style and seems to have spent more time in barrel. There is some pear and stone fruit character, with loads of caramel and butterscotch, but the wine is still lively.*

Kramer: *This is a deliberately oak-driven style, but the wine has enough power and concentration of fruit to carry the weight. It is well made for the style.*

Meunier: *There is a good barrel-fermented nose intertwined with fruit. It is an older, traditional style and sits somewhere between the other two wines in this flight.*



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COURTESY LUCIA

Santa Lucia Highlands, CALIFORNIA

The Santa Lucia Highlands AVA is a crooked strip of land, 18 miles long that has vineyards planted on the southeast-facing side of the Santa Lucia mountain range. The AVA was approved in 1991, and today 5,900 winegrape acres are under cultivation, about 2,000 of which is in Chardonnay. The premier vineyards are planted on a few inches of volcanic topsoil, sitting on decomposed granite with a bit of limestone. The entire AVA shares similar soil, characteristic winds and a long, cool growing season, which tend to provide grapes of textural richness with good acidity. The Santa Lucia Highlands AVA enjoys the longest growing season of any AVA in California.

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Lucia

Lucia 2009 Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay (14.1% alc.) \$40

Gary Pisoni was one of the first to foresee the viability of the area as a premier grape growing region, planting Pinot Noir cuttings from one of Burgundy's Grand Cru vineyards in 1982. His **Pisoni Vineyard** is famous in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA, especially for its Pinot Noir. His sons **Jeff** and **Mark** "grew up in the business," planting grapes and making wine with Gary and his early clients. Mark took greater interest in growing grapes. Jeff Pisoni was fascinated with the winemaking. He graduated with an Enology degree from **Cal State Fresno** and took on the winemaking reins of the family's Lucia brand in 2002.



According to Jeff Pisoni

"We are trying to capture the intensity of the site and its high-elevation, granite soils, then we try to balance that intensity with lively aromatics and bright acidity, along with modest oak. The grapes for this wine come from our own vineyards located at the south end of the AVA. Half of this vineyard was planted in 1982 to clone 4 in a 6-foot by 10-foot configuration, and the rest was planted in 1999 to Old Wente 5 by 8. It is all vertical shoot-positioned. The entire vineyard is gravelly decomposed granite. We determine when to pick by taste and numbers. We're looking for flavor, but we want to maintain acidity. This usually translates to 24° Brix with about 3.2 pH. We pick at night to half-ton bins and truck the grapes to our facility in Santa Rosa in refrigerated trucks.

"We run the grapes through a sorting table, looking for botrytis, and then go directly to the press, whole-cluster, pressing in one- to three-ton loads. Some juice goes directly to barrel while the rest gets some settling, but we like fairly high solids. Everything is barrel-fermented in a room kept at 50° F. We rarely add nutrients, and we stir weekly early on in the fermentation process and then twice monthly later on. Fermentations run between 58° to 65° F and take several months to finish.

"The wine ferments in 100 percent French oak with 50 percent new. We sometimes use native malolactic bacteria, but usually we will inoculate and then stir the lees weekly during malolactic fermentation, which finishes in two to four weeks. We let the wine settle for a bit before adding 30 to 50 ppm SO₂. We don't blend or rack until bottling, and we don't fine or filter. The wine bottle ages for six to eight months. We are trying to capture the intensity of our vineyard, looking for fresh, lively aromatics, full-bodied texture and a bright acid finish."

2009
CHARDONNAY

Lucia

SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS

ALC: 14.1% BY VOL

Winemakers' Tasting Notes

Pisoni: *The nose is fruity with bright mandarin orange peel and some green mango. It has a focused palate with a bit of citrus oil and an acidic backbone. It's broad with phenolic structure and a bit of oak.*

Karlsen: *It has a typical Monterey Wente clone character of squash in the positive sense. It has rich mouthfeel and nicely integrated oak. I think it would have more focus if it was filtered.*

Abate: *I get a nice mineral character with green apricot, some almond skin and that classic squash aroma. There are some strong phenolics and orange zest finish, and all of it is well integrated with oak.*

Vivier: *This is the most balanced of the three. There is a tropical character of pineapple, peach and some cinnamon spice. This wine has more acid than the other two, which creates a better finish.*

Hudson: *The wine is well balanced, round and well structured. There is a tropical fruit nose, a broad middle and the best length of the three. Good shape in the mouth.*

Hall: *There is a rich nose with hints of hazelnut. It has good oak and fruit, tempered with some lees character and spice. The wine is layered and complex. A well packaged wine.*

Meunier: *It's fresh and fruit-forward with a bright nose. On the palate, there is an appearance of sweetness until the acidity kicks in. Oak is balanced nicely, and there is a long finish.*

Kramer: *I get peach and hightone aromatics with some pretty floral qualities. It is rich and weighty and finishes with some sweetness. There is lots of impact, but I suspect the wine has less acidity than Oregon wines.*

Paige: *This has nice balance, especially for the region. There is some lovely candied stone fruit and a hint of caramelized, grilled peaches with a sweet finish.*

CHARDONNAY

Los Carneros

The Chardonnay Data Sheet

Wine



2008 Hyde Vineyard Chardonnay (14.2% alc.) \$55



2008 Hyde Vineyard Chardonnay (14.5% alc.) \$60



2009 Carneros Chardonnay (14.9% alc.) \$60

Winery Vineyard

Patz & Hall
Hyde Vineyard

HdV
Hyde Vineyard

Hudson Vineyards
Hudson Vineyards

Winemaker's goal

Express rich complexity of California fruit with sur lie character and bit of reduction. Looking for high acid, minerality and structure.

The goal is to create the essence of the place in the bottle. Hyde is all stone fruit minerality. We want restrained opulence and elegance, finesse and balance.

We want that natural California fruit, but we want it big and creamy with a long finish from acidity. We want something big and bold with length and character.

Winemaker

James Hall

Stéphane Vivier

**John Kongsgaard/
Christopher Vandendriessche**

State, County

CA, Napa

CA, Napa

CA, Napa

AVA

Carneros

Carneros

Carneros

Vineyard Location

3250 Carneros Hwy.

3250 Carneros Hwy.

5398 Carneros Hwy.

Vineyard Data

Predominant Geology (soil type)

Haire loam

Shallow clay over hard pan clay

Haire loam

Elevation

Around 65 feet

25 to 300 feet

300 feet

Vine Spacing

5x8 feet

6x11feet and 5.5.x7 feet

4x8 feet

Exposure

Southwest

Southeast

South-southwest

Selections

Old Wente

Old Wente and Calera (San Benito)

Heritage from Hudson and Hyde

Irrigation or Dry-Farmed

Drip irrigation

Dry-farm when possible

Irrigate

Farming (organic, biodynamic, traditional)

Traditional

Sustainable; some blocks organic

Sustainably farmed

Winemaking Data

Crush Details

Whole-cluster press, 1.4 bar max

5 hr.-whole-cluster pressing, 1.2 bar

Whole-cluster

Yeast

Native yeast

Half native, half inoculated

Native yeast

Fermentation Temperature

59° to 70° F

60° to 72° F

Barrel Fermentation

Yes

Stainless steel 1-5 days then barrel

20 mos., no racking, no SO₂

Oak Program

100% French, 50% new

French, 20% new

100% new Francois Frères (mt)

Barrel Aging

11 months

12 mos., then 3 mos. st. steel

22 months

Racking

Two rackings

One for bottling

One to bottle

Filtering

None, bentonite fining

None

None

Lees

Stir prior to fermentation, stir weekly through ml

Stir last 5 days of fermentation

Stir weekly, then monthly, then bi-monthly

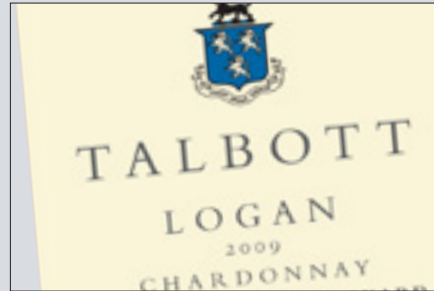
Santa Lucia Highlands

The Chardonnay Data Sheet

Wine



Lucia 2009 Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay (14.1% alc.) \$40



2009 Logan Chardonnay, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard (14.9% alc.) \$22



2009 Double L Vineyard Chardonnay (14.2% alc.) \$36

Winery Vineyard

Winemaker's goal

Lucia Pisoni Vineyard

We want the intensity of site balanced by lively aromatics and bright acidity, along with modest oak.

Talbott Vineyards Sleepy Hollow Vineyard

Looking for clean, balanced, fruit-driven wine. Logan is richer, fuller-bodied and carries more oak than our Kali Hart but a bit less extracted than our vineyard-designates.

Morgan Double L Vineyard

The goal is to make clean Chardonnay with good acidity and balanced flavors from mineral, fruit and oak.

Winemaker

Jeff Pisoni

Dan Karlsen

Gianni Abate

State, County

CA, Monterey

CA, Monterey

CA, Monterey

AVA

Santa Lucia Highlands

Santa Lucia Highlands

Santa Lucia Highlands

Vineyard Location

Southern tip of AVA

River Rd.

River Rd. near northern tip of AVA

Vineyard Data

Predominant Geology (soil type)

Gravelly decomposed granite

Decomposed granite

Sandy loam, well drained

Elevation

1,300 feet

300 to 500 feet

200 to 500 feet

Vine Spacing

5x8 feet

5x8 and 8x12 feet

6x5 feet

Exposure

Southeast

Northeast

Northeast

Selections

Clone 4 and Old Wente

Old Wente, 95, 76

95,96,76,4,17,15,CH Musque

Irrigation or Dry-Farmed

Irrigation

Irrigation

Drip irrigation

Farming (organic, biodynamic, traditional)

Certified sustainable

Traditionally-farmed

Certified organic

Winemaking Data

Crush Details

Hand-sort, whole-cluster press

Whole-cluster press

Whole-cluster press

Yeast

Native yeast

Montrachet D254

Montrachet CY3079, D254

Fermentation Temperature

58° to 65° F

62° F

60° F

Barrel Fermentation

100%

80%

100%

Oak Program

100% French, 50% new

100% French, 20% new

100% French, 35% new

Barrel Aging

11 months

10 months

10 months

Racking

Just to bottle

Just to bottle

1 rack at 5 months

Filtering

No filtering, no fining

0.2 crossflow

Sterile filter

Lees

Stir weekly during ml

Stir for sluggish ferments only

Stir for sluggish ferments only, stir 4-5 times monthly for ml

Willamette Valley

The Chardonnay Data Sheet

Wine



2009 Caitlin's Reserve Chardonnay (13.9% alc.) \$40



2008 Seven Springs Vineyard Summit Chardonnay (13.4% alc.) \$120



2007 Côte Sud Vineyard Dundee Hills Chardonnay (13.9% alc.) \$45

Winery Vineyard

Winemaker's goal

Adelsheim Vineyard Stoller Vineyard

We are after vineyard intensity with a lean angular texture and rich flavor that lingers. Wine that ages well and develops more complexity as it ages.

Evening Land Vineyards Seven Springs Vineyard

We want to showcase our individual vineyards to make elegant wine that balances fruit, minerality and complexity and will improve with age.

Domaine Serene Estate Côte Sud

The style has leaned toward the powerful and concentrated end of Burgundy. We hope to bring some leanness and minerality into the wine to make it even more complex.

Winemaker

David Paige

Isabelle Meunier/ Dominique Lafon

Tony Rynders

State, County

OR, Yamhill

OR, Yamhill

OR, Yamhill

AVA

Dundee Hills

Eola-Amity Hills

Dundee Hills

Vineyard Location

NE McDougall Rd.

Just outside Salem, OR

Hilltop Lane

Vineyard Data

Predominant Geology (soil type)

Jory

Volcanic basalt of Nekkia series

Jory

Elevation

400 feet

400 to 500 feet

600 to 650 feet

Vine Spacing

7x5 feet

12x8 feet

8x4 and 8x5 feet

Exposure

Southwest

East

South

Selections

Clone 76

Dijon 76

Clones 75, 76, 78, 95,96

Irrigation or Dry-Farmed

Dry-farmed

Dry-farmed

Dry-farmed

Farming (organic, biodynamic, traditional)

LIVE

Biodynamic

Sustainable

Winemaking Data

Crush Details

Whole-cluster press

Hand-sort, whole-cluster press

Whole-cluster to press

Yeast

CY 3079, QA23

Native/indigenous

Montachet, QA 23, CY 3079

Fermentation Temperature

60° to 70° F

Peak at 71° F

58° to 64° F

Barrel Fermentation

100%

100%

100%

Oak Program

All French, 20% new

All French, 25% new

All French, 45% new

Barrel Aging

9-10 months

11 months barrel, 4 months tank

16 months

Racking

None until blending

One

Just to bottle

Filtering

Sterile-filtered

None

Sterile-filtered

Lees

Stir for sluggish fermentation only

Stir for sluggish ferments only

Stir for sluggish ferments only, stir monthly for ml

Talbott Vineyards

2009 Logan Chardonnay, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard (14.9% alc.) \$22

Dan Karlsen has more than three decades of experience in the wine business, mostly working with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. He started at **Dry Creek Vineyards** as a maintenance mechanic but soon fell in love with winemaking. After four years at Dry Creek, he moved to **Dehlinger** as assistant winemaker. He worked at **Tattinger's Domaine Carneros**, serving as winemaker for five years. In 1998 he was named winemaker/general manager for Monterey County's **Chalone Winery**, where he spent 10 years before moving to **Talbott Vineyards**.



According to Karlsen:

"We want our wines to be clean, fruit-driven and well balanced.

We produce four tiers of Chardonnay. The Logan is our second tier. We want it to be a bit richer and full bodied with a little more oak than our Kali Hart Chardonnay but perhaps a bit less extracted than our vineyard-designate Chardonnays.

"All of our Chardonnays are 100 percent estate grown. Our vineyard is primarily old Wente clone with some Dijon 95 and 76. The plantings are 5-foot by 8-foot and 8 by 12, and half of the vines are self-rooted. The soil is sandy, decomposed granite throughout, which allows for a very homogenous ripening. We will green-cluster thin with some leaf thinning, and at harvest we are looking for golden fruit. We look at the numbers but mostly go by the appearance of the fruit and the juice. We hand-harvest into half-ton bins, going directly to the 15-ton press whole cluster. We sort in the vineyard and don't use a sorting table, again, because it abuses the fruit. We press until there is no more juice, up to 1.8 bar, which usually takes 3½ hours.

"Because we have sandy soil and lots of wind, the grapes have tough skins, which means we extract fewer phenolics. We settle for 18 to 48

hours, adding 40 ppm SO₂ after 24 hours, to ward off kloeckera fermentations, and then we rack off the lees. We want very low solids. We add Montrachet D 254 yeast and sometimes will use a pound of DAP per 1,000 gallons, but no other nutrients. Twenty percent of our fruit is tank-fermented at 62° F; the rest is barrel-fermented at 76° to 78° F. We don't stir the lees unless we have sluggish fermentations.

"All of our Chardonnay goes through malolactic to deacidify the wine. We inoculate and try to push malolactic as fast as we can to maintain the fruit. After ml, we let the wine rest two to four weeks to eat up the diacetyl because

we don't want that buttery character. We add 60 ppm SO₂ and then maintain at 35 ppm. All of our oak is French with about 20 to 25 percent new. We have about 70 to 80 different lots, and we blend them, according to the finish we are looking for. This Logan is designed for a medium finish. We bentonite for heat stability and cold-stabilize as well. Then all of our Chardonnay is sterile-filtered to 0.2 micron using crossflow filtration. We try to bottle-age for three months. Stylistically, we are looking for balance. We want clean flavor, bright fruit, and we use that mix of tank and barrel fermentation to add complexity and that tropical or pineapple character."

Winemakers' Tasting Notes

Karlsen: *Classic Old Wente squash aromas with a bright higher pitch. It's zippy and flashy. The sterile filtration gives focus and snap. There is good fruit snap from the acidity.*

Pisoni: *The wine is nicely framed with bright fruit of banana and rich pineapple. It's a supple wine with some slate and mineral character. It has refreshingly crisp acidity.*

Abate: *I get pineapple and floral qualities in the nose along with some green plum and walnut oil phenolics on the palate. It finishes with some grapefruit zest flavor.*

Paige: *This is the oakiest of the flight. I get some peach aromas. There is higher viscosity on the palate with some tannin but not necessarily body. It's almost like there is a hole in the middle.*

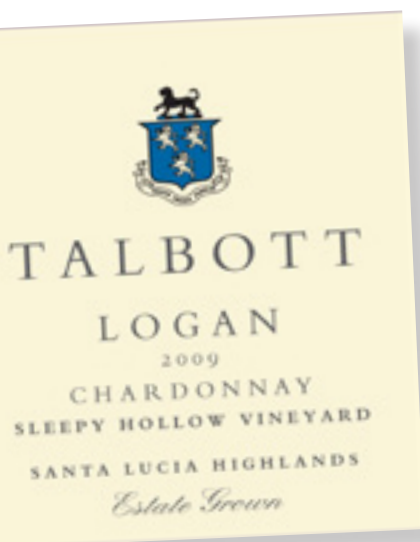
Kramer: *This is spicy with a sense of barrel development. It has weight and viscosity but lacks some plush element.*

Meunier: *I get caramel and vanilla on the nose with white peach character. The attack is round and very pleasant. It is viscous and finishes okay.*

Vivier: *Forward tropical fruit with explosive pineapple and lychee. The acid drops in the middle but reappears on the finish.*

Hudson: *This has a tropical nose and a broad middle. There is a rich component in the middle. I sense that it is completely dry but has a sweet taste. Very easy to drink.*

Hall: *Pineapple and caramelized crème brûlée aromas. It has a ripe, powerful fruit-driven nose. There is nice oak with a slight fennel note and some Central Coast aromatics.*





Morgan

2009 Double L Vineyard Chardonnay (14.2% alc.) \$36

Gianni Abate grew up in a farm family and eventually graduated college as a pharmacist. That wasn't working for him, so he combined his farming experience with his science background and settled in the wine business, working for large companies like **Bronco**, **Delicato** and **Woodbridge**. His interest in Pinot Noir and Chardonnay brought him to the Central Coast in 2002 where he made wine for **Robert Mondavi**. He moved to **Morgan** as head winemaker in 2005.



According to Abate:

"Our goal is to make clean Chardonnay with good acidity and balanced flavors of mineral, fruit and oak. Our philosophy is that we can't really fix problems; we need to prevent problems.

"Our Double L Vineyard was planted in 1996 and 1997. Several different clones are planted, but two-thirds of that is clone 95 and 15. Everything is vertical shoot-positioned, planted 6-foot by 5-foot. The vineyard is certified organic. We pick according to taste, looking for a lack of green character. The grapes are field-sorted and hand-picked in the morning into half-ton bins. Grapes go whole-cluster to four- or five-ton presses.

"Juice is cold-settled in tanks at 35° F for 36 to 48 hours. We rack the juice to another tank and inoculate with Montrachet yeast. We'll drop 2 to 3° Brix in tank and then rack to French oak, 35 percent new at 50° F. We stir lees only if the fermentation is sluggish. Fermentation usually finishes in 35 to 40 days, reaching high temperatures of 72° F. Depending on vintage, we'll put about 75 percent of the wine through malolactic. We're looking for a hint of butter, but we want to maintain acidity. We top the barrels, inoculate with ml, and that usually finishes by Christmas. We stir the lees four to five times monthly during ml. We'll add 25 ppm SO₂ to barrel post ml and do one racking at five months and then again at bottling. We bentonite, cold-stabilize and sterile-filter. Then we bottle age seven to nine months before release. We are hoping to produce a clean, balanced wine, preferring minerality to tropical character. We want good acidity and a balance of mineral, fruit and oak that tickles the tastebuds instead of overdosing on one component."



Winemakers' Tasting Notes

Abate: *There is nice minerality, along with ripe apricot and pineapple, along with some sweet oak and a crisp finish even though it is slightly closed right now.*

Pisoni: *This is complex wine that draws you in with some floral and pineapple character. The palate is texturally-driven, and there is good acidity all the way through the finish.*

Karlsen: *This is bright and fruitier, probably due to Dijon clones. There is great balance of oak. It's very complex but not bombastic. It would be great with dinner.*

Hall: *I get some Asian five-spice character. There are delicate aromas. The wine is refreshing and balanced on the palate. It is not as fruity or tropical as the other two wines, and the acid is lower than expected.*

Hudson: *There is an attractive exotic nose of ginger and lemongrass. It's stylish and thoughtfully crafted. It's properly proportioned, but the acid is not long enough.*

Vivier: *The wine has a tight, restrained nose with lots of oak. The middle is creamy but unidimensional. There is a dry phenolic finish.*

Kramer: *Interesting pear with tropical aromas. Good vibrancy and acidity. This has even more balance than the Lucia.*

Paige: *I think it is crisper with more ripe fruit character. There is some pear with less brown sugar character than the Lucia. It has nice richness, but it is restrained.*

Meunier: *This is rich, complex and full-bodied. I get honey-dew and tropical notes with good acid balance on the palate. Nice integration of fruit and oak.*



OREGON

ANDREA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Willamette Valley

The Willamette Valley had shown good promise and early success with Pinot Noir, but Chardonnay was another story. Pioneers in the varietal brought clones from California in the 1960s and 1970s and planted them using California principles. The vines were too vigorous and rarely ripened, and the wines they produced were uninspiring. After years of experimentation with Dijon clones from France, Oregon winemakers finally settled on several clones in the early 1990s that were well suited to their cool, often rainy, climates. Using those Dijon clones, the Chardonnay grapes ripened at the same time as the Pinot Noir, and Willamette Valley winemakers began producing world-class Chardonnay. Unfortunately, by the time they figured out Chardonnay, Pinot Noir was already king. The most recent figures show 12,406 acres of Pinot Noir planted in the Willamette Valley, compared to just 950 acres of Chardonnay. These Chardonnays tend toward lively acidity with good minerality but remain a bit difficult to find outside of Oregon.

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Adelsheim Vineyard

2009 Caitlin's Reserve Chardonnay (13.9% alc.) \$40

David Adelsheim was one of the first Oregon winemakers to look to Dijon clones from France as the secret to making good Chardonnay. His winemaker, **David Paige**, joined the team as winemaker in 2001. Paige got interested in wine while working in a wine shop in Ohio. He enrolled in the Viticulture and Enology program at UC Davis and earned his degree in 1989. He worked in the Napa Valley, Australia and Santa Lucia Highlands before moving to Oregon. Both Adelsheim and Paige believe that restrained winemaking methods lead to greater complexity and elegance when it comes to Chardonnay.



According to Paige:

"I want to show vineyard intensity without getting in the way of the grapes. I want to be supportive, not manipulative. I don't want the wine to be oaky or buttery, but I do want it to have a lean angular texture and rich flavor that lingers. We are looking for wines that age well and develop more complexity with time.

"All of the grapes for this Caitlin's Reserve come from **Stoller Vineyard** in the Dundee Hills. The elevation is 400 feet with Jory soils on a southwest-facing slope. The vineyard is LIVE (low input viticulture and enology)-certified. The vines are planted in 5-foot by 7-foot spacings, and 95 percent of the vineyard is Clone 76. I pick according to flavor, preferring the crisp side of things. I look for color change as my cue and would prefer to pick slightly underripe rather than overripe.

"Everything is hand-picked to half-ton bins. The grapes go whole-cluster to our five-ton press and are gently pressed up to a maximum of 1 bar. Heavy press, determined by pH or flavor, is removed. We settle in tank at 45° F for about two days until the solids are between 1 and 2 percent. We rack to tank, inoculate with yeast and ferment down to 15° Brix, maintaining a 60° F temperature before going to barrel. We'll rack to 100 percent French oak, 20 percent new and most of that Siruge to finish fermentation.

"The wine ferments slowly, usually taking four to five weeks to finish. Generally, we don't stir lees unless fermentation turns sluggish although we might try it with a couple of barrels. When fermentation is over, we add SO₂ to prevent malolactic fermentation. The wine stays in barrel nine to 10 months. We do a bit of heat-stabilization and cold -tabilize to 37° F, and then we sterile-filter to bottle."



Winemakers' Tasting Notes

Paige: *There is stone fruit with crisp tropical fruit and minerality. There is a lively quality with some floral and apple components. There is some complex snow pea or pea shoot character that is fresh and lovely. It leaves weight and flavor. There is no winemaking interference in this wine.*

Meunier: *This has an apple and fruit-forward nose, and I like the brilliance in the glass. There is a hint of minerality with a lush palate and good length.*

Kramer: *This has honey and honeysuckle with some mandarin orange character. It's not sweet but has the appearance of sweetness with good persistence.*

Hudson: *This has an attractive petrol and green apple component. There is great mouth width and a length of finish that is proportionally correct. The flavor in the mouth has a conversation with aromas in the nose. It is not a showy wine, but it is a thoughtful one.*

Vivier: *I really like this wine. It is tight, fine and elegant. It is well proportioned with a long finish. It sings.*

Hall: *It is fresh, refreshing, lean and focused with a balanced graceful palate. There is a bit of nice oak and some pretty lees character. It seems to have less alcohol than the California wines.*

Pisoni: *This is a pretty, elegant wine with some lean, slate flavors. It has a bit less texture with harder acid that cuts the finish short.*

Karlsen: *This lacks fruit and has some mousey character. It has nice acidity but a short finish.*

Abate: *Very nice with a floral, fresh fruit, petroleum nose. It's clean and crisp with some tea and grapefruit flavors. It's nice but doesn't have a long finish.*

Evening Land Vineyards

**2008 Seven Springs Vineyard Summum
Chardonnay (13.4% alc.) \$120**

Isabelle Meunier is winemaker for Evening Land Vineyards in Oregon where she works closely with consultant Dominique Lafon of **Domaine des Comtes Lafon** in Meursault. She trained in Viticulture and Enology at **Dijon University** in Burgundy and completed postgraduate work at **Lincoln University** in New Zealand. She has worked at **Felton Road** and **Seresin Estate** in New Zealand, as well as **Domaine de La Vougeraie** in Burgundy. Prior to taking her position at Evening Land in 2001, she worked as associate winemaker at **Le Clos Jordanne** in Niagara, Canada.



ANDREA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY

According to Meunier:

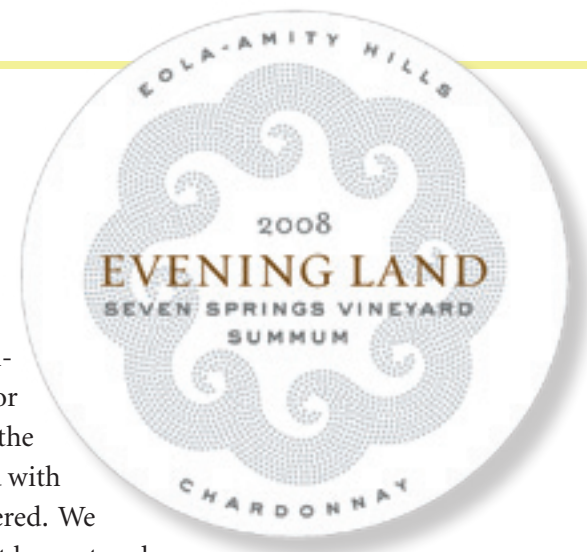
“Our goal is to showcase the terroir of our individual vineyards. We want to make elegant wine that balances fruit, minerality and complexity, and we want to produce wines that improve with age. This wine comes from **Seven Springs Vineyard**, which we consider an Oregon Heritage site as much of it was planted between 1980 and 1995.

“This four-acre block of Chardonnay is 100 percent Dijon Clone 76. The spacings are 12-foot by 8-foot with 450 vines per acre. We have farmed the vineyard organically and biodynamically since we leased the vineyard in 2007. We switched the vineyard to vertical-shoot positioning in 2008 and are currently working to lower the heads of the vines. The vineyard is east-facing, and the rows run east-west along a slope in long rows. The bottom half of the vineyard is Jory soil, but the top half, the portion that produces this wine, is Nekkia volcanic basalt. We pick based on flavor and balance. Ripeness is not our key concern; rather we look to retain acidity and maintain a lower pH. We look for brown seeds, translucent flesh and berries that pop with juice in the mouth with fresh fruit flavors and without green notes in the flavor.

“We hand-pick into quarter-ton bins and will sort if needed, but in most vintages our fruit is in very good condition and does not require it. Then we go whole-cluster to the press, adding 40 to 50 ppm SO₂, where we run a long, gentle champagne cycle with minimum rotation. We settle overnight but do not chill the juice. We redistribute the fine lees along with the juice to barrel where fermentation is carried out with indigenous yeast. (We will keep one small tank of juice in case it is needed to start fermentation.) Fermentation usually starts in five to six days and peaks between 66° to 72° F. We top the barrels in stages as fermentation slows and try for six-week fermentations if possible. We avoid stirring, unless needed, to finish slow fermentations.

“Our wine goes through spontaneous malolactic. The 100 percent malolactic gives our wine a natural creaminess without getting buttery. Malolactic usually finishes in May, and then we will add 50 ppm SO₂. Twenty-five percent of our barrels are new, usually Damy, and the wine remains in the barrels for 10 or 11 months. Then we will rack the wine, along with the fluffy lees, to a tank where the wine continues to age for another four months. We want to keep the wine fresh and clean without oxidation. We don’t heat-stabilize the wine, but we do a minimal cold-stabilization to 38° F. We will do

a light bentonite or casein fining if the wine needs it for stability or clarity. Because the wine is dry and fully finished with malolactic, we bottle unfiltered. We bottle the wine 1½ years past harvest and then give it an additional six months bottle-age before release.”



Winemakers’ Tasting Notes

Meunier: *This has aromas of honeydew and fruit, Asian pear, white peaches and some citrus on the nose. The mouthfeel shows a mineral spine with length and light creaminess. It is pleasant and should age well.*

Paige: *I get citrus blossom, orange, tangerine, fresh pea and then later some hazelnut. It is very fresh and lively, especially for a wine that is 100 percent malolactic. It is rich but integrated.*

Kramer: *This has a layered complexity with pretty layers, great viscosity and lively acidity and minerality.*

Vivier: *This is the most Burgundian wine of the tasting with some reductive, almond and petroleum character. The acid sustains from the start to the long finish. This is a wine that will age, and it is totally different from the Californian wines.*

Hudson: *This is a stylish wine in perfect proportion. There is the right amount of oak for the body type. There is a strong lime and lemon acidity that I like. Elegant winemaking.*

Hall: *Hands down, this is my favorite of the three. It’s not fruity, but instead retains intense minerality with a flinty nose. It’s almost too oaky, but pulls back to be lean and focused. Great winemaking.*

Karlsen: *This is extremely acidic with a very reductive taste. Nothing about this wine interests me. Something is wrong here.*

Abate: *This is reductive with flint and mineral. It’s in the classic French style with lime and wet rocks, sort of an underripe character, which I sometimes like, but this is too much.*

Pisoni: *There is plenty of lees and reductive character, which I like. There is a lot of acid, creating a tight core and structure. There is little fruit, some reduced mineral and a long textural finish.*

Domaine Serene

2007 Côte Sud Vineyard Dundee Hills Chardonnay (13.9% alc.) \$45

Erik Kramer has just been appointed the new winemaker at **Domaine Serene**, and 2011 was his first harvest as their winemaker. Since 2005, he has worked at nearby Adelsheim Vineyard, most recently as associate winemaker. Kramer left a career as a corporate geologist to follow his passion for fine wine, which led him to obtain a postgraduate diploma in Viticulture and Enology from Lincoln University in Christchurch, New Zealand. In addition to his winemaking experience in Oregon's Willamette Valley, Kramer has also worked for several well-reputed wineries in New Zealand and Washington.



According to Kramer:

"The Domaine Serene style has leaned toward the powerful and concentrated end of classic Burgundy. In the future, we plan on integrating a bit more leanness and minerality into the wine to make it even more complex.

"We have 18 acres planted to Chardonnay and produce four different single-vineyard Chardonnays. This one, Côte Sud (south slope), sits at 600 to 740 feet on a steep south-facing slope. The vines are both grafted and planted to their own rootstock in 4-foot by 8-foot and 5-foot by 8-foot configurations in Jory soil. This vineyard has a mix of clones: 95, 96 and 75, 76 and 78. We determine picking by the flavor of the juice. We want the fruit ripe but not overdone, and we want acidity to provide balance.

"When the juice gives us the flavor profile we want, we pick. All of our grapes are hand-harvested into quarter-ton bins. We generally don't sort, but we will if it is necessary. We whole-cluster press using a gentle champagne cycle, typically up to 1 or 1.2 bar. We press and then settle, giving the juice a modest chill. From there we will rack to French oak barrels, using 40 percent new oak. We inoculate with CY3079, QA 23 or Montrachet in the barrel. Fermentation gets up to the mid-60's F and lasts about four weeks. We don't stir unless fermentations become sluggish.

"Post-fermentation, we inoculate with malolactic bacteria when we will stir lees about once a month. Post-fermentation, we add SO₂ and leave the wine in barrel for a total of 12 to 16 months, depending on the vintage. For bottling, we rack the wine to a tank, minimally heat and cold-stabilize and then sterile-filter to bottle. We keep our wine in bottle for one year before release."

Winemakers' Tasting Notes

Kramer: *I get sweet spice, dried fig and floral character. It enters with weight and richness and good acidity. The finish is persistent with flavor and some sweetness.*

Meunier: *This is beautifully evolved with spice aromas. It is rich with an acid balance. The oak is well integrated for the weight of the wine.*

Paige: *There is some candied citrus and perfumed floral character in the aroma with nutty spice on the palate. This is bigger than the others in this flight but still has some mineral. The oak is done with style.*

Vivier: *This is very oaky. It's pretty oak, but there is a lot. This definitely belongs in the heavyweight category. It doesn't have the subtlety I like. The oak gives power, but it lacks acidity on the finish.*

Hall: *This is a winemaker's wine. There is some bread dough and caramel. It's not big, but it is rich. It's a bit hollow in the middle, lacking acidity and finish.*

Hudson: *The nose promises a big finish, but it doesn't deliver. There is a lack of finish and delivery.*

Karlsen: *Real nice. It is voluptuous with good medium aromas. It is subdued but focused with a strong mid-palate. This is a nice expression of Chardonnay.*

Pisoni: *There is some nutty, doughy character. The wine is youthful and muscular with a dense palate. It is ripe and honeyed, almost caramelized. Nicely balanced with good acidity.*

Abate: *There is some burnt character of match and smoked bacon. It has nice weight with some flinty, mineral character and a long, good acidic finish. I like it.*



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CONCLUSION

CHARDONNAY MAY BE UBIQUITOUS, but there is a reason for its popularity, and it will likely remain popular for a long time, especially in the lower price ranges and as by-the-glass-pours in restaurants and bars. Its more or less neutral character is pleasing to a wide variety of palates, and the sheer amount of Chardonnay plantings worldwide ensures continued reasonable pricing.

By itself, Chardonnay is subtle but varied. Aromatics do not jump out of the glass, but the muted aromas range from flint and mineral to stone fruit to apple and citrus to flamboyant pineapple and tropical notes. Much of this variation seems to derive from the terroir and location of the vineyard. But Chardonnay, as much as any other varietal, is influenced by the stylistic decisions made by the winemaker, and these stylistic gyrations of winemakers make Chardonnay a perfect companion to a wide variety of foods.

Higher quality Chardonnays range from very crisp, mineral-driven wines all the way to rich, buttery, oaky wines; and consumers can find Chardonnays anywhere along the spectrum bookended by those two styles. As evidenced by the wineries in this varietal focus, Chardonnay producers are shifting their focus. Acidity is essential, and the goal is to enhance minerality and tame the buttery and oaky components of the past. In effect, Chardonnay is coming back into balance.

Chardonnay represents a beautiful melding of the vineyard and winemaking arts. Dedicated growers can produce fruit that represents true terroir, and careful winemakers can take that fruit as the foundation of any style wine they would like to make. Making sure the wine has a good acid balance is a key building block. Using restraint on the oak, even when chasing an oakier style, produces better wine. Careful winemaking, along with Chardonnay's phenolic structure, lends itself to aging, which adds complexity and enjoyment. At its best, Chardonnay can be exciting, complex, age-worthy and awe-inspiring. It is a noble grape capable of great things. **WBM**




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