

Cellar Society of San Francisco

2017 California  
Chardonnay Tasting

Saturday Aug 8, 2020





---

# AGENDA

---

**5:45** Join Zoom/Hellos/Begin Your Tasting

**6:00** Ed – Welcome

**6:05** Bette will mute all for about 20 mins while we taste/fill out our score sheets, **please use the Zoom chat to ask questions when muted.**

**6:30** Lisa – A Few Notes about Oak Barrels

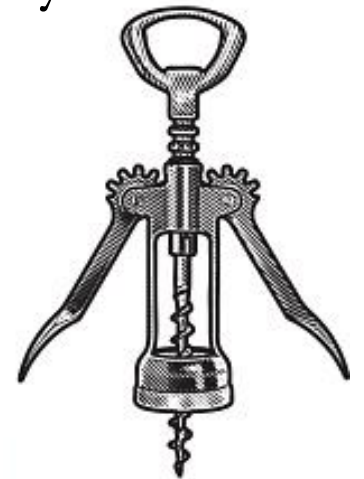
**6:40** Steve – How Chardonnay Ages

**6:50** David – Relevant AVAs and Characteristics, followed by group discussion

**7:00 Voting Closes** vote online: [cellarsocietysf.org/membersonly](https://cellarsocietysf.org/membersonly)


**7:15** Group Rankings Revealed

**7:30** Continued discussion and merriment



Chardonnay—one of the seven noble grapes—is enjoying a renaissance with a new appreciation for precision winemaking that allows the grape to shine on its own.

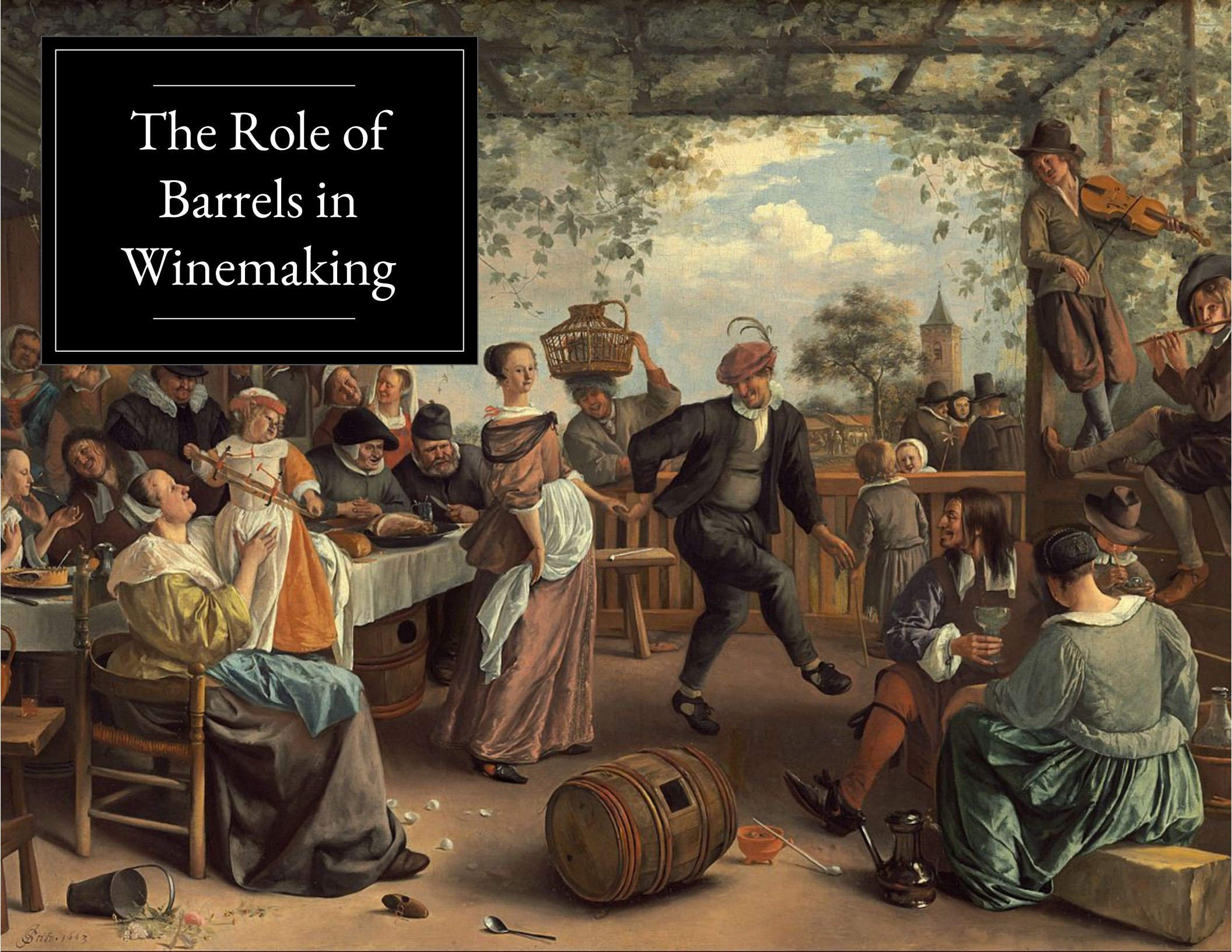
Today's third wave Chardonnays are made with ripe but not overripe fruit, often fermented in barrels but coaxed toward their innate richness allowing more subtle floral, mineral and savory notes to come forward, while structural buttery notes recede to become supporting structure.



Time to taste  
and score



# The Role of Barrels in Winemaking







## The 8,000 Year Effort To Transport Wine Around The World

[Link to Full article](#)

As the Roman empire expanded they met (and conquered) numerous cultures, many of them possessing technologies that they embraced. When the Romans encountered the Gauls they found a people who were transporting beer in wooden barrels, bound together with metal hoops. The Celts are recognized as the inventors of the wooden barrel, but it was through the Gauls that the Romans adopted them. While the Romans were aware that other, earlier civilizations used palm wood barrels to transport wine, until the encounter with the Gauls, amphorae (and dolia) were the transport medium of choice.



Shaft and Craft  
(Gran Bretaña, hacia 1670).



Botella de cebolla  
(Gran Bretaña, hacia 1685).



Botella de cebolla  
(Países Bajos, 1720-1750).



Tipo maceta  
(Gran Bretaña, 1750-1760).



Cilindrica achatada  
(Gran Bretaña, hacia 1777).



Molde triple  
(Gran Bretaña, 1830-1850).



Botella cilíndrica  
(Francia, hacia 1840).



Botella cilíndrica  
(Francia, finales del XIX).



Botella cilíndrica  
(Francia, 1903).



Botella CORONA DE ARAGÓN  
(Cariñena, siglo XXI)



# Quercus petraea



## Flavor Compounds From Oak

**Furfural** dried fruit, burned almond, burnt sugar

**Guaiacol** burn overtones

**Oak lactone** woody, dill and coconut notes

**Eugenol** spices, cloves and smoke character

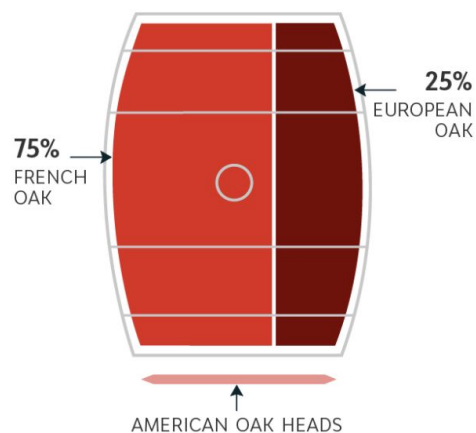
**Vanillin** vanilla

**Syringaldehyde** vanilla-like

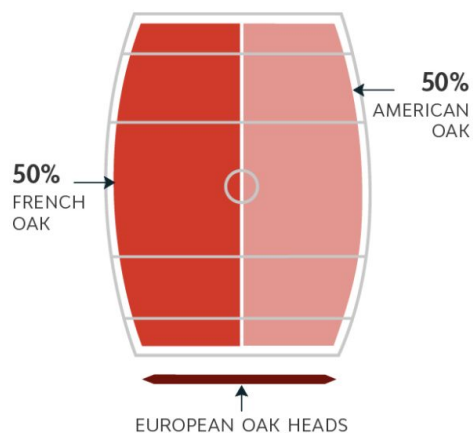
# A Few Winning Combinations

Combine three oak species to create your unique barrel.  
Below are three of our most popular recipes.

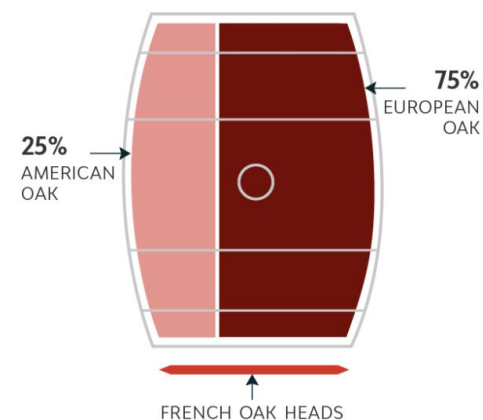
## EXAMPLE 1



## EXAMPLE 2



## EXAMPLE 3



### LIGHT

Enhanced structure  
and light notes of  
toast



### MEDIUM

Soft caramel accent-  
ed by toasted bread



### MEDIUM LONG

Supple tannins, sub-  
tle oak, accentuated  
fruit complexity



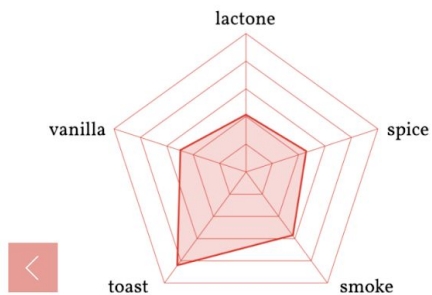
### MEDIUM PLUS

Sweet cream with  
notes of vanilla and  
brown sugar



### HEAVY

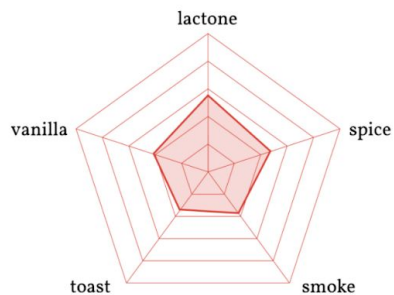
Rich mocha charac-  
ter accentuates dark-  
er fruits



## PROFILE 1

FRENCH OAK

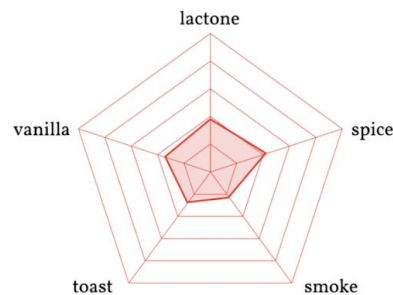
Toasty with hints of sweet smoke.  
Powerful and voluminous mid-palate.  
Long, confectionary finish.



## PROFILE 2

FRENCH OAK

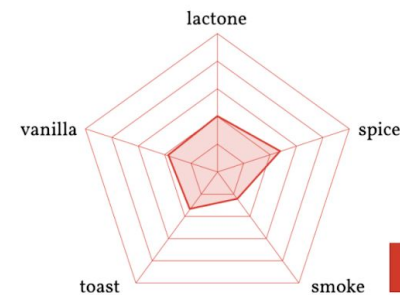
Balanced, well-integrated barrel.  
Sweet mid-palate, vanilla notes.  
Complex oak character, long finish.



## PROFILE 3

FRENCH OAK

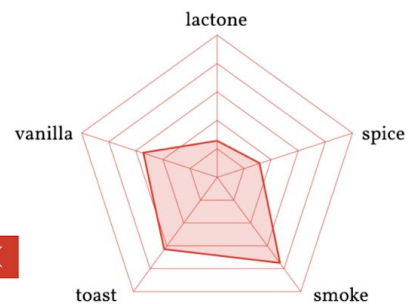
Rich, lush entry. Hints of vanilla  
wafer and caramel. Long, creamy  
finish.



## PROFILE 4

FRENCH OAK

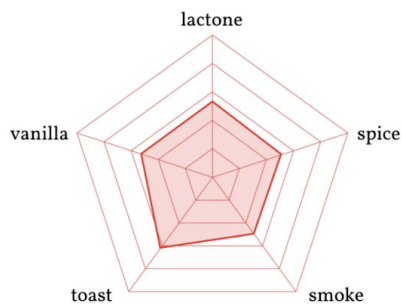
Balanced barrel, expressive aromatics.  
Hints of milk chocolate and coffee.  
Long, complex finish.



## PROFILE 78

FRENCH OAK

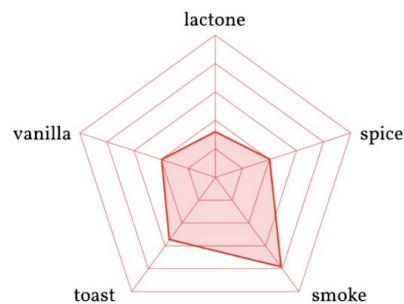
Spice and dark characters. Roasty notes.



## PROFILE 105

AMERICAN OAK

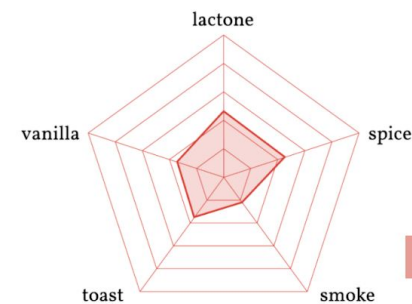
Toasty, with notes of dark chocolate.  
Sweet and impactful. Long finish.



## PROFILE 107

AMERICAN OAK

Rich, chewy tannins. Toasty aromatics.  
Notes of honey, toffee and brown sugar.

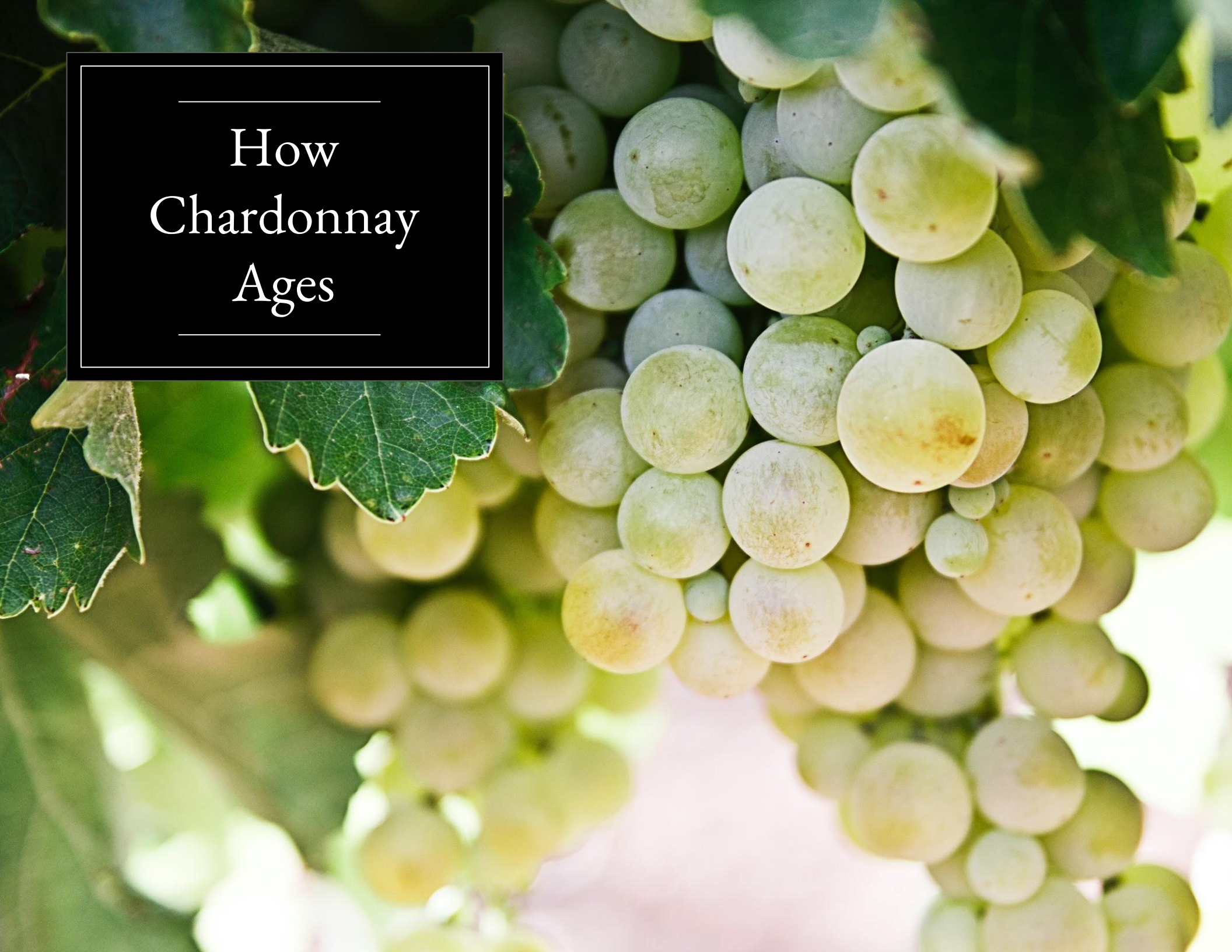


## PROFILE 119

AMERICAN OAK

Rich and spicy. Soft tannins. Added  
structure and full mid-palate.





# How Chardonnay Ages



---

# A Word About California AVAs

---





# Sta. Rita Hills AVA



- Other Maps of Lompoc Valley
- Lompoc Murals
  - Lompoc Flowers
  - Lompoc Old Town
  - Santa Barbara
  - La Purisima Trail
  - Lompoc COLT B
  - SIDEWAYS: The
  - Anza Trail Map
  - El Camino Real
  - Sta. Rita Hills
  - SB Wine Coun

- Recreation
- Golf
  - Wine Tasting
  - Historic Building
  - Park
  - AMTRAK
  - Military



# Sonoma AVAs





# Napa AVAs





1



2



3



4



5



6

Wine	Brewer-Clifton Central Coast Santa Rita Hills					
My Overall Rank						
Group Rank	5					
Group Score	115					
Price	\$30.					





1



2



3



4



5



6

Wine	Brewer-Clifton Central Coast Santa Rita Hills	Hartford Court Seascape Sonoma Coast				
My Overall Rank						
Group Rank	5	1				
Group Score	115	80				
Price	\$30.	\$65.				



1



2



3



4



5



6

Wine	Brewer-Clifton Central Coast Santa Rita Hills	Hartford Court Seascapes Sonoma Coast	Three Sticks Durrell Sonoma Coast			
My Overall Rank						
Group Rank	5	1	2			
Group Score	115	80	89			
Price	\$30.	\$65.	\$60.			





1



2



3



4



5



6

Wine	Brewer-Clifton Central Coast Santa Rita Hills	Hartford Court Seascapes Sonoma Coast	Three Sticks Durrell Sonoma Coast	Patz & Hall Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley		
My Overall Rank						
Group Rank	5	1	2	6		
Group Score	115	80	89	133		
Price	\$30.	\$65.	\$60.	\$37.		



1



2



3



4



5



6

Wine	Brewer-Clifton Central Coast Santa Rita Hills	Hartford Court Seascapes Sonoma Coast	Three Sticks Durrell Sonoma Coast	Patz & Hall Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley	Westwood Sangiacomo Sonoma Coast	
My Overall Rank						
Group Rank	5	1	2	6	4	
Group Score	115	80	89	133	107	
Price	\$30.	\$65.	\$60.	\$37.	\$30.	





1



2



3



4



5



6

Wine	Brewer-Clifton Central Coast Santa Rita Hills	Hartford Court Seascapes Sonoma Coast	Three Sticks Durrell Sonoma Coast	Patz & Hall Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley	Westwood Sangiacomo Sonoma Coast	Pahlmeyer Jayson Napa
My Overall Rank						
Group Rank	5	1	2	6	4	3
Group Score	115	80	89	133	107	106
Price	\$30.	\$65.	\$60.	\$37.	\$30.	\$70.

## BREWER - CLIFTON

2017 Chardonnay

Sta. Rita Hills

Santa Barbara, Central Coast

30.



### Sta. Rita Hills

Unique transverse valleys funnel maritime influences through a small appellation with variations in soil, aspect and microclimates to produce a patchwork of sites of character and distinction. One of the coolest climates on the west coast, Sta. Rita Hills also enjoys the longest growing season, making it ideal for chardonnay.

Regularly demonstrating citrus aromatics of lemon-lime matched with tremendous salinity reminiscent of a deconstructed margarita. Amazingly diverse food affinity as the wine serves the role of structuring condiment to food in much the same way that citrus and salt lift, elevate and to make food ultimately taste more like the food itself.

### Winemaker Notes

Only neutral barrels are employed. We strive for whole cluster fermentation and farm with a focus of ripening the stems alongside the fruit, allowing the cluster to be in harmony. Working with the stems allows for wines that are structured, earthy and balanced with our beautiful SRH fruit.

Our approach to chardonnay is one which incorporates tradition with precision and restraint. The unique oceanic qualities of the Sta. Rita hills Chardonnay first caught our attention. Focused on citrus notes and a saline quality that promotes an age-worthy structure, the uniqueness of a wine region bordered on two of its four sides by the Pacific Ocean is clear. The grapes from each site are handled identically from arrival to the cellar through bottling, allowing for the essence of each site to be expressed.

Barrel fermented in completely neutral cooperage (10-20 years old), with neither lees disturbance or malo-lactic.

### JD95 | Jeb Dunnuck

One of the great values out there—thrilling notes of white flowers, white peach, currants, and toasted bread. This ripe, sexy wine is unquestionably at the same level as the more expensive single vineyard releases, and it will evolve for just as long.

### WE93 | Wine Enthusiast

This appellation blend carries that aromatic hallmark of this winery's Chardonnays, with a streak of walnut oil that decorates the marmalades. The palate is bright in acidity, giving energy to the flavors of walnut paste, dried orange peel and toast to sun-dried honeysuckle.

### WA91 | Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

Fresh, open nose of golden delicious apple, yellow pear, acacia flowers, crushed stone and white peach. Light to medium-bodied with ripe fruits and integrated acidity, it has a long, minerally finish. About 2,500 cases were produced.



## HARTFORD COURT

2017 Chardonnay  
Seascape Vineyard  
Sonoma Coast  
65.



### Sonoma Coast

The Sonoma Coast AVA extends from San Pablo Bay to the border with Mendocino County. The appellation is known for its cool climate and high rainfall relative to other parts of Sonoma County. Close to the Pacific, with more than twice the annual rainfall of its inland neighbors, it's warm enough to ripen wine grapes because most vineyards are above the fog line.

Direct, daily influence from the Pacific Ocean defines the appellation. In the northern reach, vineyards are planted high on ridges just a few miles inland. Many lie above the fog that moves in to blanket lower elevations in the afternoon.

Some of California's highest scoring and most coveted cool-climate style wines are grown in the Sonoma Coast AVA. It includes about 2,000 vineyard acres, and fewer than 10 wineries (not counting wineries that belong to overlapping appellations such as the Russian River Valley).

### Vineyard Notes

Seascape Vineyard is a six-acre site on a scenic ridge top, located west of the town of Occidental, in the Sonoma Coast AVA. The vineyard abuts an old redwood grove and looks down upon Bodega Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Because there is no ridge between the ocean and the vineyard, Seascape is in an extremely cold spot, and Chardonnay is often picked in November. The vineyard is cropped to about two tons per acre to ensure thorough ripening. Although a challenging spot to farm, the reward at Seascape is Chardonnay grapes brimming with personality and a very distinctive terroir.

### JD99 | Jeb Dunnuck

Coming from a site on a panoramic ridgetop located at 1150 feet in elevation, west of the town of Occidental and facing Bodega Bay, the 2017 Chardonnay Seascape Vineyard is another magical effort from this estate and is a quintessential Sonoma Coast Chardonnay. White flowers, salty minerality, apple blossom, and tart pineapple all emerge from the glass, and it's medium to full-bodied and has a wonderful purity, bright (almost racy) acidity, and a great finish. Brought up in 42% new French oak, it shows almost no trace of its élevage, and while tight and slightly closed on the palate, it's nevertheless insanely good. Give bottles another year and enjoy over the following decade.

### WA91 | Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

A little closed at this youthful stage, revealing suggestions of lime cordial, lemon meringue pie, orange blossoms and acacia honey with wafts of oyster shell and green tea. Medium-bodied, the palate is elegantly played with a lovely satiny texture and a lively line cutting through the intense flavors, finishing long and minerally.

### WS91 | Wine Spectator

Crunchy and well-spiced, with savory hints to the peach pastry and apple compote flavors. Juicy richness on the finish is powered by fresh acidity. Drink now through 2024.  
– Kim Marcus, Apr. 2020

## THREE STICKS

2017 Chardonnay  
Durell Vineyard  
Sonoma Coast  
60.



### Sonoma Coast

Durell sits on the southeastern edge of the Sonoma Coast appellation—thirty miles east of the Pacific Ocean, 10 miles north of the northern stretches of San Francisco Bay, and just south of a 2,400-foot mountain range.

### Vineyard Notes

Three Sticks Wines is a boutique, family-owned winery led by veteran winemaker Bob Cabral. Durell Vineyard spans the flats of Sonoma Valley as well as the rolling hills that dominate the southwestern region of Sonoma County. Sitting in the heart of Sonoma, this special site is exposed to both the San Francisco Bay and Pacific Ocean influences that combine to produce wines of extraordinary depth.

Instead, it begins in the rocky, volcanic soils of Durell, one of the most diverse and prized vineyards in Sonoma Valley. Planted primarily to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, this rolling 610-acre parcel spans the Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Coast and Carneros AVAs, and is the birthplace of Three Sticks Wines.

**Aged in concrete and stainless steel**, the fruit holds its own in this bright, expressive wine with a persistent freshness and lingering, stony mineral bite. This Durell Chardonnay is one to cherish, for those lucky enough to score a bottle.

### JD92 | Jeb Dunnuck

From a great site in the Sonoma Coast that sits on an old riverbed, the 2017 Chardonnay Durell Vineyard spent **15 months mostly in used barrels (30% new)**. It has a slightly deep gold hue as well as a richer, fuller, more opulent style as well ample baked apples, brioche, toasted bread, and caramelized notes. Drink it over the coming 4-5 years.

### JS94 | James Suckling

Impressive complexity and powerful aromas of ripe pears and peaches. Lots of spice, grilled almonds and clotted cream. The palate has a smooth delivery of supple, creamy pears and peaches, brulee custard and plenty of spiced-orange sponge cake to close. Drink or hold.

### RP93 | Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

Aged 15 months in 30% new French oak. Scents of toast, citrus peel, wet stone and honey-drizzled hazelnuts with a core of white peaches and baked apples plus a lacey veil of sweet spices. In the mouth, it's medium-bodied and silky, with slowly expanding, honeylaced flavors on the long, juicy finish. Yum!



## Patz & Hall

2017 Chardonnay  
Dutton Ranch  
Russian River Valley  
37.



### Russian River Valley Green Valley

The Russian River Valley climate is sculpted by the regular intrusion of cooling fog from the Pacific Ocean a few miles to the west. The fog arrives in the evening, often dropping the temperature 35 to 40 degrees from its daytime high, and retreats to the ocean the following morning. This natural air-conditioning allows the grapes to develop full flavor maturity over an extended growing season.

#### Winemaker Notes

Made with some of the oldest plantings of Chardonnay in western Sonoma County, this wine is predominantly a blend of California heritage clones and selections — Hyde-Wente, Robert Young, Rued, UC Davis Clone 4 and Spring Mountain. Since some of these vines are dry farmed, they produce small but intensely concentrated berries, making for great depth of flavor and texture. Historically, Dutton Ranch yields fragrant, tropical aromatics and a crisp mineral character. **Dutton Ranch is in the heart of Russian River's cool Green Valley.**

Aromas of ginger, guava and Crème brûlée with toasted almond, and toffee-brown sugar. Dense, and full bodied, there's a pleasingly crisp and mouth watering green apple note on the palate that melds with dried apricot, tangerine flavors along with a hint of toasted oak.

- 100% Whole-cluster pressed
- 100% indigenous yeast fermentations
- Sur lie aged with weekly stirring
- 100% malolactic fermentation in barrel
- 100% Burgundian French oak barrels (35% new; 65% 1-2-year old )

### JD95 | Jeb Dunnuck

One of the great values out there—thrilling notes of white flowers, white peach, currants, and toasted bread. This ripe, sexy wine is unquestionably at the same level as the more expensive single vineyard releases, and it will evolve for just as long.

### WE93 | Wine Enthusiast

This appellation blend carries that aromatic hallmark of this winery's Chardonnays, with a streak of walnut oil that decorates the marmalades. The palate is bright in acidity, giving energy to the flavors of walnut paste, dried orange peel and toast to sun-dried honeysuckle.

### WA91 | Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

Fresh, open nose of golden delicious apple, yellow pear, acacia flowers, crushed stone and white peach. Light to medium-bodied with ripe fruits and integrated acidity, it has a long, minerally finish. About 2,500 cases were produced.



## Westwood

Sangiacomo  
Robert's Road Vineyard  
Sonoma Coast

30.



## Sonoma Coast

### Annadel Gap Vineyard

Terroir notes from the winemakers: There is no other place like this in California. We are a cold, windy site, and our vines struggle to ripen their fruit. We have morning fog until well past noon, and strong Pacific winds all afternoon, four different soil types reflecting the ancient seabed, upturned by eons of volcanic activity. It all comes together in one of the most unique grape growing spots on the West Coast. Similar to Petaluma Gap to our south, Annadel is a gap between Sonoma Mountain and Mount Hood, allowing cool Pacific winds and fogs to roll in most mornings and evenings. The wind has two main benefits: It causes lower yields and a thicker skins on the grapes. The fog is cooling. Allowing grapes to cool down overnight makes for slower ripening and the 40-50 degree temperature variations help enrich flavors while maintaining the acidity that gives them great structure and balance.

### Winemaker Notes

This complex Chardonnay has bright aromatics of lemon curd, freshly cut feijoa, orange blossom, tarragon, raw honey and a subtle touch of flinty notes. On the palate it has a brilliant citrus entry, lemon lime acidity throughout, contrasted beautifully with powerful texture from aging on the lees and a satisfying long finish of lemon tart.

The former dairy farm studded with Black Walnut groves features a gently sloping profile ranging from 410 to 530 feet, with four distinct soil zones of various loams resembling the famed Gold Ridge soils more common to Western Sonoma County. The vineyard is cooler than most in the northern reaches of Sonoma Valley, more closely resembling vineyards founded further west in the Petaluma Gap.

### JD95 | Jeb Dunnuck

The single vineyard 2017 Chardonnay Sangiacomo Vineyard comes from a site on the Sonoma Coast and was fermented and aged 8 months in 30% new French oak. It's a more racy, salty, vibrant effort that has terrific white flowers, orange blossom, and honeyed citrus notes as well as medium to full-bodied richness. Balanced, layered, and just a great example of the rich yet racy style that's prevalent in the vintage, it's going to benefit from a year in bottle and I suspect have a decade of longevity.

### WE93 | Wine Enthusiast

This wine is fleshy on the palate and bright in aromas of citrus and stone. Notes of pear, flint and lime provide an unctuous nature on the palate, with refreshing acidity making for a nicely balanced and memorable experience.

### WA94 | Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

The 2017 Chardonnay Sangiacomo Vineyard, barrel fermented and aged in 50% new oak, sings of honey drizzled white peaches, lemon tart, lime cordial and shaved almonds with touches of struck match, chalk dust and mandarin peel. Medium-bodied, the palate has electric citrus intensity with a lively line of freshness and bags of mineral notions on the long finish. 304 cases produced.



## Pahlmeyer

Jayson  
Napa  
70.



### Napa Atlas Peak

America's most famous wine region, which encompasses a varied geographical territory running about 20 miles long from the San Francisco Bay northward to the foot of Mount St. Helena. Napa's great diversity, both in terms of climate and terroir, has led to the creation of a number of smaller AVAs like Stags Leap District, Rutherford, Howell Mountain, Oakville and Mount Veeder, among others. Cabernet and chardonnay still reign supreme. Pahlmeyer's estate vineyard - Waters Ranch - is situated at 2100 feet in the Atlas Peak appellation of Napa Valley.

### VINTAGE NOTES

The 2017 vintage started off with very wet conditions that resulted in robust canopy growth. During summer, the vigorous leaves helped protect clusters from warm, dry weather. We took extra care to keep the fruit load balanced, with continued diligence in the cellar, bringing out its best expression. The grapes were harvested at peak ripeness in mid-August, and we are thrilled with the stellar quality of the wine despite a challenging growing season.

### WINEMAKING NOTES

Our Chardonnay was picked during the cool of the night and each cluster was inspected and hand sorted at the winery before being gravity fed into the bladder press. The juice settled in stainless steel tanks for 24 hours. After rigorous inspection, we racked the finest lots to 100% new François Frères French oak barrels and monitored fermentation daily, stirring the lees only as needed to stimulate the process. After malolactic fermentation, the wine continued to age on lees for 11 months. The wine was bottled without fining or filtration.

### JD96 | Jeb Dunnuck

Bottled in August, the 2017 Chardonnay Napa Valley offers Aubert-like notes of white flowers, white peach, tangerine, flower oil, and white flowers. It's rich, layered, so pure and balanced, and is just a class act as well as one of the top Chardonnays in this report.

### WE94 | Wine Enthusiast

A thick oak-influenced white wine, with weight and breadth across the palate, this is undeniably delicious and in full possession of its richness and concentration. The layered flavors of stone fruit, pear and nutmeg are lifted by focused acidity that cannot be denied.

### WA93 | Robert Parker's Wine Advocate

Composed entirely of fruit from Atlas Peak the 2017 Chardonnay gives very pretty white peaches, pink grapefruit, honey-drizzled pears and lime blossoms with touches of nutmeg, marzipan and baker's yeast. The palate is medium-bodied with a slight, very pleasant phenolic grip to the texture and bags of stone fruit and pear layers, finishing on a lovely savory note.



Ciao  
Vinophiles!





1



2



3



4



5



6

Wine						
My Overall Rank						
Group Rank						
Group Score						
Price						

## Comments/Notes/Feedback:

Make sure all Zoom attendees have any handouts emailed well in advance of the meeting so they have time to print out (specifically for the Donner/Tahoe or other remote tasters). – Lisa Long

Huge thanks to all of you – Ed, Lisa, Steve, David – who worked to assemble a great virtual tasting event!

Informative, with beautiful slides. -- John Henry