



HOW TO AGE CHARDONNAY

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Before I Forget...

Exactly 49 years and 358 days ago
the Cellar Society of San Francisco
was founded in the Bacchus Room
of Ernie's Restaurant (8/15/1970).

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Why Age Wine?

- When a wine that has the potential to improve with age is aged:
 - The wine is much more complex.
 - Both the aroma and taste are full and include nuances.
 - The acid is reduced(which makes the fruit pronounced).
 - The aftertaste is long.
 - The wine can be enjoyed without decanting (aeration).

What Allows a Wine to Age?

- For any wine to age it must have:
 - The right amount of acid.
(Acid fades with age.)
 - The right amount of fruit.
(Fruit fades with age.)
 - The right amount of tannin (red wines).
(Tannin fades with age.)
 - The right amount of oak.
(Oak does not fade as fast as the fruit does.)
 - Not too much alcohol (for the amount of fruit).
(Alcohol does not fade with age.)

What Happens to Chardonnay with Age?

- Not all Chardonnays have the ability to age.
- Many California Chardonnays don't have enough acid.
(Not enough acid is like bad grape juice with alcohol.)
- Some California Chardonnays have too much oak.
- Some are made to drink now (Rombauer).
- When the right Chardonnays are aged, they have:
 - Bright and rich fruit flavors (stone and tropical fruits).
 - Interesting nuances (butterscotch, cinnamon, coconut, etc.)

Which AVAs Produce the Best Aged Chardonnay?

- The best AVAs for aged Chardonnay are cooler:
 - Russian River Valley (RRV)
(DuMol, Walter Hansel and others.)
 - Carneros (Los Carneros, Southern Napa and Sonoma)
(Hyde and Durell Vineyards (and others) by Ramey, Aubert and others.)
 - Santa Rita Hills
(Brewer-Clifton, Sea Smoke and others.)
 - Oak Knoll (Southeast Napa)
(Ch. Montelena)

(French Chardonnays age better than those from California because the climate is cooler and, therefore, the wines have more acid.)

Which Chardonnays Age Best?

Medium Priced (<\$65)

- DuMol “Chole” (\$65)
- All Walter Hansel
 - Estate (\$25) 4 to 8 yrs
 - Cahill Lane (\$35) 5 to 10 yrs
 - North Slope (\$35) 5 to 10 yrs
 - Cuvee Alice (\$35) 6 to 12 yrs
- Chateau Montelena (\$45)
- Stony Hill (\$50)

High Priced (>\$100)

- Aubert (\$125+)
- Sea Smoke (\$100+)
- Peter Michael (\$100+)
- Kongsgaard (\$100+)
- Marcassin (\$250+)

How do I Age Chardonnay?

- To age any wine you must determine when it is mature:
 - Buy several bottles so when it is mature you have bottles left.
 - Buy a wine with lots of reviews on Cellar Tracker so you can get opinions from other people for the exact wine you are aging.
(For example, Ch. Montelena Chardonnay has many reviews of older vintages on Cellar Tracker, Walter Hansel does not (but you can always ask me).)
 - Buy at least 6 bottles and taste one every year.
 - When you drink the wine save 1 to 2 oz. to taste the next day, when there is no fruit the next day the wine may be mature.
 - Buy the same wine every vintage, California wines have better consistency from vintage to vintage than French wines do.
(Use the experience with one vintage to guess when to start drinking the next.)