

2000 Chardonnay

Chateau Labbé Vineyard

Sonoma Valley

The Vineyard: Fred Labbé's, Chateau Labbé Vineyard, is in central Sonoma Valley in Kenwood, just behind the Landmark Winery. In this appellation, Kenwood is one of the best locations in all of California to grow Chardonnay. The weather is warm enough to impart structure and body, cool enough to give elegance and balance. Fred meticulously tends his vines, using the latest techniques: vertical-tucked cane trellising, early season leaf thinning, mid season hedging, bunch thinning at veraison, and dropping of less than optimal bunches. The result is evenly ripe fruit of optimum quality.

The Wine: The grapes were hand picked into small bins so as not to crush the fruit on the way to the winery. The hand-sorted, whole clusters were put uncrushed into the press. No pumps or augers were used. The press gently squeezed the grapes with no more pressure than a mild handshake. 40 cycles of press, deflate, turn and press were used to extract the juice. The result was a superb juice with low solids and a total absence of the bitterness associated with harder pressing.

After the juice settled for two days, it was poured into barrels for fermentation. The wine completed malo-lactic fermentation while being stirred every week (known as sur-lee's aging). Three different yeasts were used to add additional layers of complexity. The wine was fined with bentonite for heat stability and cold stabilized before bottling; no flavor fining was needed.

Chardonnay made in the French Burgundy style rather than the typical California style. Anyone tired of over-oaked, heavy-handed, highly-buttered California Chardonnays will love this one. It has the taste of the Chardonnay grape with just a touch of well-integrated oak. It's full of fruit rather than "full of butter." There are layers of flavor without edges or gaps. It has the perfect combination of roundness in the front and crispness in the back. It's fresh without being tart, will age well and compliments food beautifully. This is one Chardonnay you won't have to finish drinking before the meal. It's easy to make cookie-cutter Chardonnay. It's more difficult to give true expression to the delicate flavors found in the Chardonnay grape.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemaker:	Robert Rex & Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, September 24, 2000
Brix at Harvest:	23.0° Brix
Acid at Harvest:	.69g/100ml as tartaric, corrected to .78g/100ml
pH (composite):	3.19
Yeast:	50% Eperney II (French), 30% #CY3079 (Calif.), 20% Assmenhausen (Alsace)
Fermentation:	100% oak barrel
Max. Fermentation Temp:	65°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100%
Aging:	Sir-lee's stirred every week for 11 months in 100% French Oak, 35% new
Fining:	Unfined except for heat stability
SO ₂ at Bottling:	14 ppm free
Bottled:	890 cases - September 18, 2001
Alcohol:	14.3 %
Released:	June 1, 2002
Awards & Reviews:	Not yet submitted or reviewed. The 1999 vintage, from the same vineyard, won a gold medal and a 90 point rating

