

2001 Chardonnay

Ch. Labbé Vineyard

Sonoma Valley

The Vineyard: Fred Labbé's, Chateau Labbé Vineyard, is in the middle of Sonoma Valley in Kenwood. This is one of the best locations in 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 Vintage: A late spring frost killed the first bud growth in this vineyard and the crop was set on the second bud (the vines will grow a second or third bud in response to such freezes). The quality from the second buds was very good, if somewhat late to ripen, but the yield was less than half of normal.

The Wine: The grapes were hand picked. After hand-sorting, the uncrushed, whole clusters were very gently pressed. The grapes were gently squeezed with no more pressure than a mild handshake. 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. Three different yeasts were used to add additional layers of complexity.

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 has the perfect combination of roundness in the front, crispness in the middle and a mellow, long finish, made deeper and more complex by a year of bottle aging. It compliments food beautifully.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemaker:	Robert Rex & Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, October 14, 2001
Brix at harvest:	23.0°
Acid at harvest:	7.29g/L
pH at harvest:	3.64 pH
Yeast:	40% Eperney II (French) 30% #CY3079 (California) 30% Assmenhausen (Alsace)
Fermentation:	100% oak barrel
Max. Fermentation Temp:	68°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100%
Aging:	Sir-lees stirred every week for 11 months in 100% French Oak, 40% new, 3 yr air dried oak
Fining:	Bentonite for heat stability only
SO ₂ at Bottling:	14 ppm free
Bottled:	281 cases - July 29, 2002
Alcohol:	14.5 %
Released:	February 1, 2004
Awards & Reviews:	3 gold medals and 90+ pts over three vintages, this vintage not yet submitted.

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