

2002 Chardonnay Sonoma Valley

Sonoma Valley is our favorite appellation for Chardonnay. It has the perfect combination of soil and weather to grow perfectly balanced Chardonnay grapes. The soil is volcanic, with elevated levels of trace minerals, relatively shallow soils without too much vigor. The weather is cool at night, often over cast or foggy in the morning and warm in the afternoons, between 75 and 90 F in the summer. It rains a lot in the winter and does not rain at all in the summer and early fall, perfect conditions, and perfect terrior. Sonoma Valley Chardonnays gain more flavor than their Coastal, Russian River or Los Carneros brothers. They exhibit more structure, mirroring the greater variations in the weather compared to these other places. They grow more like they do in Burgundy, France, where come the most renowned Chardonnays in the world.

The Vineyards: Our 2002 Chardonnay is a blend from two vineyards: The 4 acre Chateau Labbé Vineyard in Kenwood, behind the Landmark Winery on the Sonoma Highway, and the 2.5 acre Jemrose Vineyard, in Bennett Valley near Matanzas Creek Winery on Bennett Valley Road. Both vineyards are tended daily by their owners, babied might be a better word. The viticultural practices are state of the art organic although neither vineyard is yet certified organic. Each vineyard is a mixture of clones mostly Dijon.

The Wine: We have returned to a more traditional style with this Chardonnay. It is not big and oaky. It doesn't taste like buttered oak toothpicks. It tastes like the Chardonnay grape with just subtle overtones and nuances of oak, butter, and vanilla from the barrel fermentation and sur-lees. It's intended as a dinner wine and not a cocktail, although it is perfectly good by itself. The key is vine ripened fruit flavors that are carefully retained by gentle winemaking techniques and little manipulation. The fermentation was started on native yeasts and then inoculated with multiple strains of classified yeasts to produce more complexity in the blend.

The grapes were hand picked and hand sorted. All damaged grapes were culled. This makes a cleaner wine, more true to its varietal. Clean wine also produces no wine headache. The wine was 100% barrel fermented in French oak barrels made from two and three-year air-dried wood, compared to greener wood used for most Chardonnays.

Tasting Notes: This is an elegant Chardonnay made in the French Burgundy style rather than the typical California style. There are layers of flavor without edges or gaps. It's fresh without being tart, will age well and compliments food. This is one Chardonnay you won't have to finish drinking before the meal.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemakers:	Robert Rex & Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, September 16 & 30, 2002
Brix at Harvest:	22.5 Brix, composite
Acid at Harvest:	6.59g/L as tartaric, composite
pH:	3.38
Yeast:	40% Eperney II (French), 20% #CY3079 (Calif.), 20% Assmenshausen (Alsace), and native yeast
Fermentation:	100% oak barrel, 30% new
Max. Fermentation Temp:	65 F
Malo-Lactic Conversion:	100%
Aging:	Sir-lees stirred every other week for 10 months
Fining:	Bentonite for heat stability only, no flavor fining
SO ₂ at Bottling:	18 ppm free
Bottled:	1,450 cases – August 27, 2003
Alcohol:	14.5 %
Released:	January 10, 2005

