

Chateau Montelena 2004 Napa Valley Chardonnay

Winemaker's Notes

The location of Montelena's Chardonnay vineyards gives us early bud break and early ripening. This was a distinct advantage in 2004, because it allowed us to harvest fruit with good physiological maturity well before any impact from the heat events of September. Otherwise, nice even ripening conditions prevailed for most of the growing season. With no remarkable weather events to speak of, the Chardonnay harvest amounted to an average size.

We started picking on August 20 with our youngest vines. The "real" vintage began on August 26 with an organized and excellent Chardonnay harvest. Virtually all of the Chardonnay was harvested at night in order to assure delivery of good cool fruit. Among other benefits, this helps these grapes retain more of the positive flavor and aroma characteristics than in a daytime harvest. We used two pressing methods this year: whole cluster, where bunches are pressed intact; and de-stemmed, where berries are knocked off the stalks, cracking the grape-skins prior to pressing. The first method is gentler and yields bright, delicate fruit flavors. The second method involves a little extraction of flavor and aroma compounds from the grape-skins, giving us big bold aromatics. In 2004, with the prime ripe fruit, we de-stemmed 43% and whole cluster pressed 57%. This year's Chardonnay shows a very typical Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley ripeness with excellent character.

Tasting Notes

The combination of properly farmed, correctly sited vineyards and good growing conditions delivered a wine that has Montelena's typical bright yellow-gold color. Aromas of very rich Chardonnay dominate the nose, while green apple, melon, citrus (grapefruit) combine for a very nice mélange that contributes complexity. Also interesting, the 2004 exhibits more pronounced floral tones than is typical – perhaps an added benefit of night harvesting. On the palate this Chardonnay has a nice soft entry leading to a round, full-flavored impression of fruit, melon and citrus rind. It is elegant and balanced: supple, yet with crisp acidity, a direct result of no malolactic fermentation. This wine is a classic Chateau Montelena Chardonnay of strong yet fresh fruit flavors, elegant and refreshing, stylish with bold balance.



Production and Technical Data

Harvest Dates:	Aug 20 to Sept. 8
Bottling Date:	August 2005
Release Date:	Spring 2006
Production:	9500cases
Appellation:	Napa Valley
Time in Oak:	8 to 10 months
Sugar at Harvest:	23.8° to 25.0° brix