

Retrospective

CHARDONNAY



VINTAGES 1973 - 2006

CHARDONNAY RETROSPECTIVE TASTING NOTES

1973 - Open and Enjoy

Surprisingly youthful, the first wine we ever made displays trademark Trefethen acidity, structure, and complexity. Gold in color with aromas of cut apple, honey, dried hay, vanilla, caramel, and lemon cream, it's slightly oxidized on the palate, leading us to the conclusion that it probably won't get much better. But for a guy who has never taken a chemistry class in his life (John Trefethen) this is a stunning first attempt. Must be the vineyard ...

1974 - Open and Enchant

Gold in color with an entrancing nose. Honey, apricot, lemon, hazelnut, graham cracker, and a hint of botrytis. Great acidity and minerality, but a little flat on the mid palate, this is a fascinating older Chardonnay, just starting to fade.

1975 - Drink or Hold?

Still fresh and lively, the 1975 is a revelation. A pleasing straw color, the nose is absolutely beautiful, with soft aromas of dried apricot, lemon zest, vanilla, clover, pear, melon, honey, and butterscotch. Medium bodied, nutty, and with great acidity, it has a finish that goes on and on. Wow. Is it possible that a white wine this old still has years to go? You betcha.

1976 - Still "All That"

The wine that put Trefethen and Napa Valley on the map, "The Best Chardonnay in the World" still has it. A pretty straw color with a reserved nose of apricot, pear, clove, lilacs, buttered toast, and wet stone, the '76 has faded a bit in the mouth but still displays nice acidity and citrus fruit. One to savor, for sure.

1977 - Strong

Golden with a luscious nose, this wine is peaking right now. Bright aromas of green apple, lemon tart, honey, and stone lead into a medium body and a long nutty finish. A superb wine.

1978 - Time to Drink

This wine is fading, but still holds plenty of attraction with a nose of baked apples, honey, apricots, and roses. Good structure and a full mouthfeel falls a little short on fruit, but exhibits a delightful minerality.

1979 - Drink Now

Past its peak, this wine is starting to show its age with a deep gold color and some oxidation, but it still fills the glass with plenty of interest. Dates, honey, lime, and apple cider tickle the nose, and the mouth is still nicely balanced.

1980 - Past its Prime

Deep gold in color, this wine exhibits the characteristic sherry aroma of an oxidized wine. Still balanced on the palate, but the fruit has faded.

1981 - Over the Hill

A brassy color gives it away. Oxidized sherry aromas, the fruit has dried up completely.

1982 - Drink Up

Attention-grabbing with better color than the previous three vintages, this wine has a curious Gewurztraminer character. John Trefethen assures us that there was no secret blend this vintage, but that nose is pretty distinctive! Apple, pear, honey, oat grass and lemon, the '82 is nicely balanced with lively acidity and a medium-long finish.

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1983 - Past its Prime

A slight brown tinge in its color, the '83 has some nice apple, pear, and honey, but is mostly oxidized. The acidity and structure are okay, but it is fading.

1984 - Past its Prime

Brassy with an oxidized nose, this wine still holds some interest in a lively palate with flavors of pear, honey, and cinnamon toast, but it too is fading.

1985 - Nice Legs

Holding up better than the rest of our Chardonnays from the 80s, this wine still has legs. And shapely ones, at that. Deep yellow with a complex nose of apple, pineapple, violets, pear, lemon zest, toasty oak and a delightful minerality. Full bodied, with balance, poise, and a medium finish, the '85 is still dancing.

1986 - Drink Yesterday

Still an interesting wine with some tangerine, guava, walnuts, and old leather, the '86 is unfortunately showing its age with an oxidized nose and a tired palate. Enjoy it soon.

1987 - Clean

Still lively, this wine belies its age with good structure, weight, tangy acidity, and an incredibly clean finish. Golden with hazelnut, tarragon, fennel, citrus, and apple, this is one to relish.

1988 - Your Next Dinner Party

Showing a young, brilliant color, the '88 is surprisingly youthful with aromas of dried hay, apple, citrus, and some tropical fruit. That said, it's not as balanced as our typical Chardonnay, with angular acidity, some green stemminess, and a slightly bitter finish. Still, it's a fun wine that would be great alongside food.

1989 - Never Released

After a disappointing harvest, we spent a lot of time in the cellar with this wine, but in the end we felt that its quality did not reflect Trefethen's commitment to excellence. None was ever released for sale, and time has borne out that decision.

1990 - Relief Hitter

After 1989, this vintage was a great relief. Still bright and clean with tart acidity and good structure, it displays good lime, pineapple, and guava fruit with ginger and floral backnotes. Open and enjoy.

1991 - Luscious

Red delicious apple, bosc pear, butter, toasty oak, lime, and honey. Full, luscious mouth and balanced acidity. Not sure it's getting any better, but it's damn fine right now.

1992 - Refreshing

A bit simple, this wine has nonetheless held up incredibly well. Pale gold in color, with aromas of apple, lemon, clover, honey, and Asian pear balanced by a buttery toastiness. Bright, refreshing acidity with a long finish.

1993 - Lean

Very Burgundian in style, this leaner chardonnay has some nice lush green notes and chalky minerality. And it's bit skunky, too, if we're honest. Nice apple and citrus fruit on the mid-palate, and a lighter body, you could really fool your francophile friends with this one.

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1994 - Open, Swirl, and Enjoy

This wine needed a little air to open up, but when it did, it displayed a complex nose of lemon, crab apple, dried apricot, lime, and vanilla. The fruit carried through on to the palate; light and refreshing with a steely finish.

1995 - Mellow Yellow

Sit back, kick up your feet, and let this wine slip off your socks. Pineapple, nectarine, lime, and lemon meringue pie, this wine is delightfully soft in texture, with a lasting finish.

1996 - Ripe, but Tired

Riper fruit than most with mango, guava, and peach, the '06 hasn't aged as gracefully as its cousins. Slightly oxidized with butterscotch and sherry flavors coming to the fore, it's a little thin and tired.

1997 - Soft and Beautiful

Deep yellow with hints of gold, and a beautiful nose. Rich aromas of lemon lime, ripe pear, melon, and mandarin orange leading into a soft mouth with medium body, red delicious acid, and good acid. Holding well.

1998 - Time to Drink

Red delicious apple, butter, honey, and pear, the '98 is clean, but not fresh. A lighter wine, it is starting to fade, with reduced acidity and a hint of oxidation. Better enjoy it now!

1999 - Still Developing

Great structure with nice balanced acidity and a hint of tannin in the back palate, this wine still needs some time in the cellar to fully blossom. Lime, green apple, and pear flowers with hints of nutty oak. Yum.

2000 - Stylish

Fresh and lively, with a lovely, complex nose, the 2000 is beautifully put together. Aromas of grapefruit, lemon custard, ginger, pineapple guava, baked apple, and fresh flowers. Pleasant on the palate, with a nice body, balanced acidity, and a lingering finish, this is definitely a GQ wine. Delightful now, and sure to age well.

2001 - Light and Lasting

Slightly more austere in style, this wine is certain to stick around for quite a while. With green apple and lime zest contrasting with tropical pineapple, guava, and papaya, it's tasting pretty good now, too.

2002 - Not Reviewed

2003 - Yum and Yummier

The best of the the 2000's (thus far), this wine is a treat. Medium yellow in color, with a youthful nose of pear, yellow apple, melon, and a hint of lees contact, it's delightfully textured on the palate; medium bodied with red apple, lemon custard, and a long finish. Young and lively, the '03 will be on the dance floor for a long time yet.

2004 - Full and Rich, and for a While Yet

An interesting nose of rich tropical mango and guava fruit, enmeshed with juniper berries, nutmeg, ginger and caramel lead in to a rich, full mouth, with good acidity and a lingering finish. Delectable now, and for a while longer.

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2005 - Fresh and Forward

Delicious. Nice blend of fruit and oak on the nose, balanced and elegant on the palate. Will only improve with age.

2006 - Just a Babe

Still in its infancy, the '06 is a taste of what's to come. Yellow apple with a touch of oak, lees, and minerality, it's balanced and deeply textured with a long finish. Very youthful, it still needs time in the bottle. And judging by its sisters, it will be dancing for a long time yet.