



CHATEAU MONTELENA
ESTABLISHED 1882

2014 Napa Valley Chardonnay

Notes from Winemaker, Matt Crafton, August 2016

INTRODUCTION

The 2014 vintage was sunny, just warm enough, and bountiful—the fundamental, or at least superficial, criteria for a “great” vintage. The truth, naturally, is more complex. While no one ever complains about beautiful weather and a bumper crop, we tend to look at vintage characteristics a bit differently. If there are good or great vintages, then there necessarily must be bad vintages and I think these sorts of blanket statements are hyperbole at best. Just as any good chef will tell you that nature doesn’t make bad ingredients, we see the trends, challenges and idiosyncrasies of each vintage as an opportunity to decode our soil, vineyard and region through the lens of our fruit. It’s this perspective and our inherent intellectual or creative curiosity that sets us apart as the details and nuances of each growing season are what make each year special and unique in its own right, and thus the final wines “great.”

VINTAGE WEATHER

After a dry winter and mild spring, we did get one substantial rain event before budbreak to saturate the soil profile for the beginning of the growing season. However, drought conditions dominated overall necessitating precise applications of water, which allowed the vines to maintain sufficient stress but still ripen slowly and methodically throughout the summer warmth. The temperatures remained relatively cool at night propelling harvest to an early but not record-setting start as all of the Chardonnay was picked over a roughly two week period from late August to early September.

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NOSE

The additional five years in glass have allowed this wine to blossom. While still quite fresh on the nose with Asian pear, lemon peel, and white peach, the baking spices have emerged handsomely. It’s still too early for any aged character to become prominent, although there’s the slightest hint of fresh apricot, a harbinger of good things to come.

PALATE

The concentration and density here are impressive. While this had always been a strikingly fruit-forward vintage, it’s exciting to experience more mineral character in the forms of crushed gravel and chalk. Moreover, the fruit here leans more citrus—as lemon oil—along with baked apples. There’s certainly more toffee and burnt caramel as well, relics of barrel aging and lees contact.

FINISH

Supple creaminess and toast drive the finish as the acid has softened and integrated with time. Here there is some marzipan but it’s still lurking beneath white pepper and clove. This is a beautiful Chardonnay that is just hitting its stride.

Technical Information

HARVEST DATES

August 25 – September 8

ALCOHOL

13.6%

BLEND

100% Chardonnay

BARREL AGING

10 months, French oak

BOTTLING DATE

July 27 – August 7

WINEMAKER

Matt Crafton