CHATEAU MONTELENA
ESTABLISHED 1882

2020 Napa Valley Chardonnay

Notes from the Winemaker, Matt Crafton

INTRODUCTION

Chance favors the prepared mind. Louis Pasteur realized that success flows not only from insight but also good fortune. That duality appropriately applies to the challenging but ultimately gratifying 2020 vintage. During most growing seasons, the progression beginning with ripening in the vineyard and flowing through to harvest is methodical and calculated. With our optimal Napa Valley climate, ideal soils and a stellar track record of wines, it's seductive to believe that every vintage will proceed as planned. But at Montelena, we know that history has proven otherwise and that the paradigm can shift at any moment, so we prepare. Our team, equipment, and methodology are flexible and malleable precisely to account for the unforeseen. It's manifested in shaping each individual wine to reflect the growing season. It's also evident when the unpredictable occurs; in this case, the entire 2020 Chardonnay harvest was compressed into one week, a far cry from 15 to 30 days in most years. Luckily, we had the good fortune of a remarkable growing season and exceptional ripeness. But our success in creating this delicious wine was solidified by the unshakeable dedication and expertise of our team.

VINTAGE WEATHER

The warm, dry spring was punctuated by two inches of rain in May, spurring vine growth heading into summer. There was plenty of heat and sunshine during June and July as ripening accelerated ahead of schedule. The lighter than expected crop pushed ripening further ahead as all of the Chardonnay vineyards began to move together, like a tidal wave. The wave broke on August 22. After seven intense days, the entire Chardonnay crop was harvested successfully, the fastest on record for us.

NOSE

Bright gold in the glass, the wine opens with green apple, honeysuckle and orange blossom. The citrus in particular seems to be most evident, as lime leaf and lemon zest at this stage. This vintage was more classic rather than overly ripe, so it's not surprising. There's a hint of fresh wood and vanilla as well, adding some nuance without overshadowing the beautiful floral character.

PALATE

The parade of citrus marches on, although the midpalate turns more tropical with starfruit and pineapple. And while there's still plenty of green apple, the texture and juiciness of Asian pear adds complexity and depth. The acid is consistent and winds its way through the profile, lifting the texture and balancing the suppleness from barrel. This will be a long-lived wine.

FINISH

The transition to the finish is still somewhat abrupt due to the wine's youth and dynamism. This will change over time. But here, the character is dominated by lemon curd and pie crust, along with chalk and fresh apricot. The acid is still mouthwatering, although it has mellowed somewhat. Despite its young age, the overall length of this Chardonnay is impressive.

Technical Information

HARVEST DATES
August 22–28

ALCOHOL
13.8%

BLEND
100% Chardonnay

BARREL AGING
10 months in French oak

BOTTLING DATE
July 26–August 2, 2021

WINEMAKER
Matt Crafton

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