

# Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S QUARTERLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

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\*No new member tastings  
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## The Wide Reach of CHARDONNAY

Chardonnay...What are your first thoughts when you hear the varietal's name? White, golden, buttery, creamy, oaky, tropical fruit flavors - all easily come to mind. The varietal is an intriguing subject as it is grown and produced by wine rookies and veterans alike around the globe. Chardonnay produces menial, mass-produced wines and highly specialized wines alike.

Everyone has heard of Chardonnay, but where did it originate? You've perhaps noticed that Chardonnay appears to be from pretty much every wine region out there, and you see it from places you didn't even know produce wine. Chardonnay's original home is Burgundy in eastern France, which also happens to be Pinot Noir's motherland (interesting to note that Monterey County shares the distinction of producing world renowned Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wines).

Some of the finest Chardonnays are from Burgundy, although the history of the grape there is ironic. Historically, the grape was so widely planted and used for wine it was generically referred to as "White Burgundy." Today is quite a different story as Chardonnay is revered and held to great esteem. Due to French labeling traditions, you'll not often see "Chardonnay" on a French wine bottle, but popular growing areas you may recognize include Montrachet, Côte de Beaune, Mersault, and Mâconnais. These Chards tend to present butteriness, but not oakiness.

In France, Chardonnay is also grown outside of Burgundy, notably in the Chablis and Champagne regions, and in Chablis, Chardonnay is often quite the opposite of both buttery and oaky. Yes, "Chablis" is actually Chardonnay, despite the fact that it became used as a general term for any mass-produced white wine. And you may be surprised that, as in France, the majority of sparkling wines in the world are made from Chardonnay grapes.

Why are Chardonnay wines seemingly produced everywhere? To explain, we need to jump into the vineyards and dive into the barrels. However, the quick answer is that it's reputed as one of the easier varietals to grow and coax into wine - don't think this indicates though that it is only a mediocre varietal unable to display greatness.



In the vineyards, Chardonnay is the typical make or break varietal. It's the varietal most often planted by a new winery in a new area...the thought being that if one can produce a good wine with it, they will have graduated and can move on to other varietals.

That is not to say that it's a carefree endeavor at all. The varietal is early budding, making it susceptible to spring frost damage. The vine is also prone to a host of other vineyard complications, including being highly vigorous and requiring intensive pruning and canopy management. Harvest time is also very critical as the grapes quickly lose their acidity just after ripening, and if they are not harvested promptly, the juice produced from the grapes will suffer for it.

The grape is famous for its ability to adapt to conditions it is exposed to. Chardonnay is considered to be "malleable" by growers and winemakers. This means that it is very eager to embrace its terroir conditions and also a vintner's particular style.

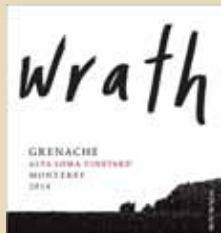
In winemaking, Chardonnay is made in all forms from still to sparkling to late harvests. After considering terroir conditions that may influence the grape, the two most important factors impacting Chardonnay wines are oak and malolactic fermentation, both of which result in two characteristics most often associated with Chardonnay wines: oakiness and butteriness. The wine would not have these characteristics otherwise, explaining why you see new world Chardonnays which have neither oak or butter and are instead lighter and fruitier in style. These wines tend to exhibit tangy flavors such as green apples and tropical fruits. If malolactic fermentation (sometimes referred to as secondary fermentation) is not introduced by a winemaker, butteriness will not be present. Also, if the wine is not oaked during fermentation and later barreling, there will be no oakiness. Other winemaking influences include temperature during fermentation and time spent aging "on the lees" (i.e. the wine's contact with dead yeast cells after fermentation - called sur lie aging).



*Continued Inside*

# RESERVE WINE SELECTIONS

## WRATH - 2014 Grenache



**Winery:** Wrath produces site-driven Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, Grenache and Sauvignon Blanc from their estate vineyard and respected properties in the Santa Lucia Highlands. The production is small, the distribution is limited and the wines reveal attitude, passion, and an inherent respect for what a vineyard can give them.

**Vineyard:** This Grenache comes from the certified Biodynamic Alta Loma Vineyard, a sloping, hillside site located just south of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. The vineyard is exposed to the strong winds that flow each afternoon from Monterey Bay to the north. The long, cool growing season allows the grapes to mature slowly and develop extraordinary varietal and regional character.

**Tasting Notes:** Deeply colored for the varietal, this Grenache is intense, high-toned and elegant. The aromatics offer notes of pine forest, juniper, spice, earth and wet stone. The palate is powerful, structured, rich and direct with a long finish that includes noticeable, well-integrated tannins.

**Wrath**  
2014 Grenache

**Alcohol**  
14.3%

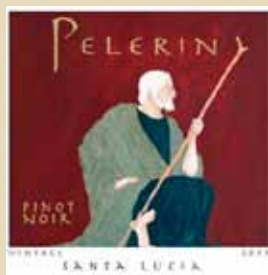
**AVA**  
Monterey

**Composition**  
100% Grenache Noir

**Cases Produced**  
69

**Aging Potential**  
6-7 years

## PELERIN - 2013 Pelerin SLH Pinot Noir



**Winery:** Featured on the cover of Connoisseurs' Guide for their "highly rated Syrahs and Pinot Noirs". Building on exceptional quality fruit, Pelerin Wines is dedicated to traditional winemaking methods and to making unique and well-balanced wines of intensity and complexity from cool-climate fruit. Pelerin (French for "pilgrim") produces 3,250 cases a year, and started with the 2000 vintage.

**Winemaking:** Owner/winemaker Chris Weidemann is former Assistant Winemaker both to John Kongsgaard at Newton Vineyard, and also with Morgan Winery. His style focuses on textural balance and complexity while creating intense and dramatic wines, operating based on feel and taste as well as science.

**Tasting Notes:** The wine offers a classic range of ripe cherry, floral and spicy aromas and flavors possessing a rich and full mouthfeel with lively fruit flavors and typical SLH red and dark fruit density. Blended from superb SLH vineyards: Tondre, Fairview, Rosella's and Sierra Mar, hand-picked, left un-racked and in 30% new French oak.

**Pelerin**  
2013 SLH Pinot Noir

**Alcohol**  
13.4%

**AVA**  
Santa Lucia Highlands

**Composition**  
100% Pinot Noir

**Cases Produced**  
700

**Aging Potential**  
5-6 years

## ALEXANDER SMITH - 2015 SLH Chardonnay



**Winery:** If the Smith family is known for one attribute above all else it's their friendly hospitality. So it's a good thing they are in the business of growing grapes and making wine, because nothing makes them happier than sharing the product of their passion and bringing joy to others. What better way to gather people together, celebrate life, relax, smile and laugh than a fantastic bottle of wine enjoyed with friends?

The luxury wine brand, Alexander-Smith, was named to honor parents, Rich Smith and Claudia Alexander Smith. Hand crafted from select lots of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah grown on their prestigious Santa Lucia Highlands home estate, these exclusive wines epitomize the highest quality.

**Vineyard:** Their Alexander Smith Estate SLH Chardonnay is made exclusively from estate-grown grapes. Produced from entirely Old Dijon clone chardonnay grapes planted in the 1970's from their Home Ranch vineyards. Full and rich with Old World balance.

**Tasting Notes:** Notes of pineapple, citrus and mango flood the nose as a butter and almond flavor envelope the palate and linger with a full-bodied finish and hint of acidity.

**Alexander Smith**  
2015 Chardonnay

**Alcohol**  
14.5%

**AVA**  
Santa Lucia Highlands

**Composition**  
100% Chardonnay

**Cases Produced**  
300

**Aging Potential**  
5-6 years



Cover Article Continued



Let's talk food pairing for a moment. Chardonnay is actually considered difficult to match with food, especially heavily oaked and buttery Chards. Although if you think about it, match oak to oak/toasty flavors, and match butter to butter as much as possible. Heavily-oaked Chards can pair well with smoke-flavored and spicy cuisine. And buttery cream sauces are a great fit for buttery Chardonnays.

In the U.S., one can find Chardonnay vines planted in more than 30 states. Although, let's be honest ... Chardonnays from Iowa or New Jersey really don't compare with those from California. Chardonnay was first planted for commercial production by Wente Vineyards in the Livermore Valley in the 1940s. Monterey, Santa Barbara, Napa and Sonoma Counties produce the most prominent Californian Chards. California's Chardonnay first reached acclaim and world-recognition when Napa's Chateau Montelena beat out French competitors in the 1976 blind tasting event known as the Judgment of Paris (Monterey's own Chalone Vineyards came in third place at the event).

These days in Monterey, we still find a wide variety of Chardonnay wines produced and offer some of the finest, not only in California, but in the world. The coastal influenced Santa Lucia Highlands AVA, in particular, is a spectacular setting for Chardonnay vines, which is reflected in its numerous outstanding Chardonnay wines.

In recent years, there has been a trend for winemakers to move away from the oaky or buttery style Chardonnays in favor of producing "clean" and crisp wines, often highlighting muted pineapple or apple undertones. Although these stainless steel aged and/or no malolactic fermentation Chards are interesting and savored by some, it's clear that there will always be a significant group who love the big oaky/buttery Chardonnay. Here at A Taste of Monterey, we're honored to showcase some of the best Chardonnays found anywhere.

-Bryce Ternet, Contributing editor and author of three books. See [www.mbryceter.net](http://www.mbryceter.net).

## RECIPE

### Stuffed Parasols

#### Ingredients

12	Parasol Mushrooms
3	strips bacon, fried crispy, drained and crumbled
6 tablespoons	frozen petite peas, thawed and drained
2 tablespoons	butter
2 tablespoons	flour
1	large shallot, minced
3/4 cup	milk
1/2 cup	grated Gruyere
1/4 cup	grated Parmesan
2 tablespoons	bread crumbs
	couple of grates fresh nutmeg
	salt and pepper
	cooking spray

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Break stalk out from parasol and clean caps - gently!

Sauté shallot in butter over medium heat until translucent, then add flour and sauté for 2 minutes. Gradually add milk, stirring constantly until sauce thickens. Add nutmeg, salt and pepper. Add Gruyere and 1/2 the Parmesan, stirring constantly until cheese is melted. Remove from heat and add bacon and peas.

Coat the cups of a muffin pan with cooking spray. Spoon the filling evenly into the mushroom caps. Mix remaining Parmesan and bread crumbs and top the mushroom caps. Drop one stuffed mushroom into each muffin cup. Bake 30-40 minutes, or until the top is golden brown.



## VISITING Varietals



### GRENACHE

**Pronunciation:** gruh-NAHSH

Grenache noir is the world's most widely planted grape used to make red wine, sometimes made into a stand-alone varietal, frequently as a Rosé, but most often as a backbone of red blends.

Used as a component in some Northern Rhône reds, nearly exclusively for Rhône rosés and as the primary component in nearly all Southern Rhône red blends, Grenache is probably most notable as the base varietal for Chateaufort du Pape, Cotes du Rhône and Gigondas. In spite of its fame coming from French wines, Spain is most likely this grape's origin.

Particularly important in the areas of the Languedoc and Roussillon, there are also variants with different colored berries: white Grenache Blanc, and pink Grenache Rose or Grenache Gris.

In the New World, Australia has extensive plantings of Grenache and has been very successful making full-bodied Grenache-dominated red blends. Until surpassed by plantings of Merlot in the past decade, Grenache was the third most planted red variety in California after Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon.

The grenache grape is relatively low in both pigment and malic acid, and oxidizes readily. Although some 100% varietal wines are produced from Grenache, particularly in Spain's Rioja and from some "old vines" plantings in California, it is mostly used to "fill out" red blends and soften harsher partners, such as Syrah and Carignan.

On its own, Grenache makes fleshy, heady, very fruity wines in their youth. They tend to age rapidly, showing tawny colors and prone to oxidation or maderization after only a relatively short time in bottle. The general character and mouthfeel of Grenache wines are more distinctive and identifiable than any particular aromas or flavors.

CHEESE

Varietals



## APPENZELLER

Appenzeller cheese, made in the Appenzell region of northeast Switzerland, dates back over 700 years. It is a hard, cow's milk cheese made from untreated or raw milk and truly natural with no preservatives or additives. The spicy flavor comes from the closely guarded secret herbal bath given it during production and aging. The recipe is enhanced by the fact that the cows graze on lush herbal grasses and fresh hay – never silage. Great care is given to the animals. The cows are given regular and frequent visits to the grazing fields so everything can be as natural as possible for them, even in winter.

There are several Appenzellers to choose from. All are made from untreated raw milk. Most contain 48% fat in dry matter, which is specifically measured to ensure consistent taste.

**Classic** - This version is aged for 3 months and is mildly spiced. The cheese is ivory-colored to light yellow with a yellow to reddish brown natural rind. It's identified by its silver color label and it represents 45% of Appenzeller sales.

**Surchoix** - Strong spiced cheese aged over four months. It has the same ivory-colored appearance and reddish brown rind as the classic. The cheese is identified by its gold label and it represents 45% of sales.

**Appenzeller Extra** - This cheese is aged six months or longer and only the best ones are selected and handled by the best master cheese makers. The cheese is ivory to yellow in color but the natural rind is reddish to dark brown. It's identified by a black and gold label. This cheese represents only 2.5% of sales.





**Appenzeller BIO** - This cheese was first made in 1996. It is similar to the Appenzeller Classic. The only difference is that it is made from organic milk and it has BIO on the label which means it is produced with BIO-SUISSE guidelines for organic milk production. This cheese represents less than 1% of sales.

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 Pelerin 2013 SLH Pinot Noir		\$42.00	\$31.50	\$33.60
 Alexander-Smith 2015 SLH Chardonnay		\$45.00	\$37.75	\$36.00
SEPTEMBER SELECTIONS	PRICES EXPIRE 11/30/2017			
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 Joyce 2015 River Road Chardonnay		\$25.00	\$18.75	\$20.00
 Joyce 2014 Tondré Syrah		\$30.00	\$22.50	\$24.00
 Pareto's 2015 Chardonnay		\$14.00	\$10.50	\$11.20

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