



Cabernet, Chardonnay, And Virtual Wine Tasting

Chardonnays from the Willamette Valley tend to be leaner and more acidic than those from Napa and Sonoma Valleys. We find them a better pairing to delicate fish dishes that can be overwhelmed by fat and buttery chardonnays. While most consumers think of this region for its pinot noir, it's about time to think of it for its chardonnays.



Dan Warnshuis

Dan Warnshuis makes chardonnay at Utopia in the Ribbon Ridge area, the smallest AVA in the valley. He admitted he is challenged to get full ripened grapes in this cool region but the longer growing season improves acidity levels.

“Chardonnay takes a little longer to ripen than pinot noir,” he said. “But in Ribbon Ridge, marine soils are warmer during the growing season and that helps chardonnay to ripen.”

He said he likes making chardonnay because “it’s a blank sheet of paper and really exhibits terroir.”

Here is a half dozen chardonnays to try:




*Bergstrom
Vineyard Sigrid
Chardonnay 2017*

Utopia Estate Chardonnay 2017 (\$45). Tropical fruit and citrus flavors abound in this delicate, balanced, medium-bodied wine with a hint of spice.

- **Lenne Chardonnay 2018** (\$45). Creamier in style, this lush chardonnay has apple and pear notes.
- **Alloro Vineyard Estate Chardonnay 2018** (\$34). From the Chehalem Mountains appellation, this lean chardonnay shows off plenty of apple and citrus fruit flavors.
- **Bergstrom Vineyard Sigrid Chardonnay 2017** (\$110). The price of this wine makes it cost prohibitive for most people but we mention it because of the top-drawer quality that comes from Willamette Valley. We opened a 5-year-old Sigrid the other day that was one of the best chardonnays we've ever tasted. The 2017 is very aromatic and rich with stone fruit and Meyer lemon flavors.
- **The Eyrie Vineyards Estate Chardonnay 2018** (\$27). Apple and mineral notes dominate this delicious wine from a venerable producer in Dundee Hills.
- **Stoller Family Estate Dundee Hills Chardonnay 2019** (\$25). Understated pear and apple notes with some minerality make this an enticing chardonnay to pair with food.

Newton Vineyards

Newton Vineyards is a winery that has on several counts pioneered innovation in viticulture and winemaking in Napa Valley.

 The winery and vineyards were founded in the late 1970s by **Peter Newton** and his wife **Dr. Su Hua**, who purchased a square mile of Spring Mountain and planted vineyards on the unfashionable hillside. Hillside vineyards are common now, but in pre-boom Napa Valley most wineries planted on the more easily farmed flatlands. In addition, instead of clear cutting the entire hillside, Newton cleared and planted vines on only 73 acres of the available 560 acres.

Newton was one of the founders of Sterling Vineyards, which was noted for their cable car access to the winery tasting room. Newton and his partners sold to Coca-Cola in 1976 in what turned out to be an ill-fated venture for Coke. Luxury products and prestigious winery owners LVMH purchased a majority of Newton Vineyards in 2001 and Newton died in 2008.

Newton was a believer in using indigenous yeasts and not filtering wines.

Here are some of the wines we recently tasted:




*Newton
Chardonnay
Unfiltered Napa
Valley 2017*

Newton Chardonnay Unfiltered Napa Valley 2017 (\$55). This chardonnay is one of our all-time favorites in the premium price category. Soft expressive fruity nose and flavors with a complex mélange of creamy pineapple, pear, and tropical fruit. A whiff of oak and a long cream accented finish.

- **Newton Cabernet Sauvignon Unfiltered Napa Valley 2017** (\$60). This well-made cabernet sauvignon is a blend of mountain and valley floor fruit. Classic cherry and cassis elements dominate in an elegant oak frame. Ready to drink now or age for the mid-term.
- **Newton Puzzle Napa Valley 2017** (\$125). Made from all five classic Bordeaux grape varietals. Cabernet Sauvignon dominates at 72 percent creating a powerful but beautifully elegant package. Plum and cherry with a hint of chocolate present in a wine exhibiting soft tannins and presenting the opportunity to drink now and enjoy its youth or layaway to enjoy a bit of bottle age complexity.

St. Supery programs

 Many California wineries are making the best of closed tasting rooms by offering virtual tastings through Zoom. One of the most interesting programs we have found is St. Supery. Not only do they walk you through a tasting of one of their great wines, but they offer a demonstration of making a meal to go with the wine. Its current 6-part series focuses on harvest in both the vineyard and in the garden.

The series is held weekly on Thursdays at two different times. The programs are free but you can mail order the wines that will be part of the tasting. To register, go to <https://stsupery.com/virtual/>

English Sparkling Wine

The British have seized the moment capitalizing on global warming to develop a sparkling



*Nyetimber Classic
Cuvee English
Sparkling Wine M/V*

wine industry that is thriving. Nyetimber, in southern England, is a leader in this movement in crafting sparkling wines from the three traditional Champagne varietals — pinot noir, chardonnay and pinot meunier — as well as planting on chalky soils similar to the Champagne region. Recently British bubbly has bested some established French

champagnes in international competitions, and some French champagne houses, notably Taittinger, have invested in English land and planted vineyards.

With Nyetimber a leading British sparkling wine producer producing about a million bottles per year, we recently tasted their leading seller, the **Nyetimber Classic Cuvee English Sparkling Wine M/V** (\$60). We would be hard pressed to differentiate this sparkling wine from one of its French Champagne counterparts. Classic yeasty nose paired with creamy ripe apple fruit in the mouth. Long, ripe fruit finish and subtle acidity.

Wine picks



*Trapiche
Medalla
Cabernet
Sauvignon
Mendoza 2017*

Trapiche Medalla Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza 2017 (\$25). Sometimes we feel Argentina falls short in the production of cabernet sauvignon by creating wines with vegetal or other off notes. Do not avoid this offering from Trivento. Made from 100 percent cabernet sauvignon grapes, this wine shows ripe plum and berry flavors with a hint of tobacco in a nice easy-to-drink style.

- **Markham Vineyards Napa Valley “The Altruist” 2017** (\$29). Merlot is the dominant grape variety in this Bordeaux-like blend. A good value, this wine embraces sustainability. Soft and generous mouthfeel coats the palate with ripe cherry and plum flavors and oak-inspired hints of vanilla and toast. “Altruist” is dedicated to veterans and first responders.
- **Landmark Overlook Chardonnay 2018** (\$27). Not overly oaked, this well-balanced chardonnay shows off layered fruit with notes ranging from apples to apricots, lemon and nuanced spice. One of our favorite chardonnays of the summer.

Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr, MoreAboutWine, posted on SouthFloridaReporter.com, Aug. 31, 2020

Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr have been writing a weekly wine column for more than 30 years. Additional Wine reviews on MoreAboutWine

All photos are randomly selected and do not indicate any preferred wine. Listed prices are subject to change.

Please drink responsibly.

You can send questions to Tom Marquardt <mailto:marq1948@gmail.com>