



LE GRAND CLOS BLANC
SINGLE-VINEYARD

2020
CHARDONNAY

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Le Grand Clos Chardonnay, from the lovely and artistic 2020 vintage, overflows with dry extract and verve, and is rich, taut, and seamless. Tasting this 'Grand Vin' at a slightly

warmer temperature than usual highlights the complexity of the Chardonnay grape at its best, showcasing its dolomitic limestone terroir.

TASTING NOTES

The Le Grand Clos Chardonnay is undeniably the most noble yet reticent of the Le Clos Jordanne set once again, exhibiting the least 'warm year' characteristics of the bunch. A chalky, lime-tinged, almost granitic, quarry-dust quality permeates every layer of the wine. These notions mingle together on the nose with a touch of the just slightly waxy, lightest of acacia honey aromas. The texture is fine and refined with slight 'tilleul' (perhaps even chestnut) tones on the midpalate and finish. Impressive in its understatement, even the savoury minerals are in check: nothing is out of place.

"From the warmer 2020 vintage, a rare artistic vintage in which the dry autumn let winemakers make unhurried, considered choices." Both the Le Grand Clos Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wines happen to come from specific blocks on the western side of the vineyard: a

happstance of aspect and geology. The Le Grand Clos parcel defines itself in juxtaposition to the Claystone Terrace, only several hundred metres away. The reluctant purity here is unbelievable: the terroir wants to be chalky-lean, but carries the regal breadth and weight of a Grand Vin with poise. A further word on the common traits of the Le Grand Clos terroir, evident in both red and white versions: both display a very fine chalkiness – quite apart from their bracing acidity – that weaves throughout and informs, and refreshes the considerable weight and unctuous texture of the wines.

Drinking Prime: From 2024-2029. Thomas Bachelder, winemaker.

VINE MANAGEMENT

All of our vineyards are farmed sustainably in order to preserve the natural balance of the vines and respect their terroir. We use traditional practices in the vineyard, which we feel helps maintain the quality of the fruit and its aromatic identity. Each parcel is treated individually according to its terroir specifics, and each vine is cared for by hand from pruning through to harvest.

At the start of the season, we begin by pruning, using a single or double Guyot system (depending on the spacing and the vine's vigour). We then tie down the canes to the fruiting wire. Following bud-break, we position each shoot by hand, removing lateral and shoulder spurs for better ventilation and better concentration on every single cluster. Just before veraison, we strip the leaves on the eastern side of the vine, exposing the cluster to more sun and airflow, which promotes healthy ripening and prevents disease

development (in wetter, more humid years, we remove the leaves on both the east and west sides of the vine; in hotter years we may also leaf-pull on the western side, although later, to prevent 'sunburn' of the grapes). At mid-veraison, we green harvest if we feel our crop is too large or if disease pressure is present. After veraison, we net the vineyard parcels at risk to protect our grapes from bird damage until harvest.

In terms of soil management, our goal is to nurture and maintain a natural level of microbiological life. We cultivate every other row and leave a selected cover crop in the remaining rows, which creates competition within the root system and allows the topsoil to remain loose and aerobic. Each year, we also break up the soil (deep-ripping) of every second row, in order to aerate the soil structure, and to help avoid compaction.



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GROWING SEASON & HARVEST

The year 2020 was a rare artistic vintage, a year in which sugar accumulation was slow, acid retention was good, and there was no rot present. One could wait for the perfect moment to make ripe wines that had great technical and flavour maturity, and spot on sugar and acid levels. A miracle vintage! The great wines we taste from 2020 will more likely be the fruit of artistic choices, and not just worry, happenstance, and intelligent compromise. Many people love Niagara's warm years: 2007, 2010, 2012, 2016 and 2018 for instance, but in the case of defining terroir through early-maturing grapes (grapes of Burgundian origin, amongst others), those years can be a bit round, a bit broad, oftentimes with what I like to call 'stressy' tannins, in an otherwise lovely, juicy, just slightly overripe wine. Did 2020 escape this problem? "Yes, largely!" After the last frost in late spring, from budbreak to harvest, we had a gloriously dry and warm summer and fall. Rainfall events came just when the vine needed them to continue development, notably, after such a long, dry, hot summer, the fairly regular rains came to the vines' rescue, but not so often that we had disease problems. Harvest Dates: In Niagara, it is normal to start to pick Pinot Noir and Chardonnay anywhere from September 10th to the end of September.

After the summer that the northern hemisphere collectively experienced in 2020 (Burgundy, for instance, completed most of their harvest in the month of August!), we worried that we in Niagara would be forced to pick screamingly early, and risk making "jam:" dark, concentrated but ultimately monolithic wines. It didn't happen, as blessedly, the nights got cooler into September, harvest was delayed, sugar development was slow, and acids were retained (likely due to the vines at least partially "shutting down" their photosynthetic activity in the hottest part of the summer). In the end, we picked on typical dates! Aside from the young-vine sites (namely, low-yielding and thus precocious), Niagara picked the grapes for sparkling wines a little later (!) than

VITICULTURE & PRODUCT INFO

Trellising System	Vertical Shoot Positioning: Single and Double Guyot
Planting Density	5299 vines/ha (2145 vines/Ac)
VQA Sub-Appellation	Twenty Mile Bench
Alcohol	13 % Vol
pH	3.4
Residual Sugar	1.5 g/L
Total Acidity	5.6 g/L (expressed as Tartaric Acid)
Racking	Once, after full barrel ageing term, from barrel to vat.

we thought we would, and the Pinots and Chardonnays (for still wines) were picked pretty much at the usual time. Thus, the cool nights of September and the summer's waning heat "rescued" the vintage from becoming a potentially "fruit bomb" vintage, and instead 2020 became a nearly perfect vintage in terms of sugar, acid and pristine fruit condition. *Thomas Bachelder, Winemaker*

"Growing degree days for 2020 were 1584 GDD and, although it was one of the warmer recent years, the coolness of the nights in September and October helped us retain natural acidity, and made for an outstanding, ageable vintage." *Gerald Klose, Vineyard Manager*



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WINEMAKING & ÉLEVAGE OF LE GRAND CLOS CHARDONNAY 2020

Our Chardonnay bunches are whole cluster pressed after judicious sorting across a vibrating table. The juice settles in tank at 8-10°C for a couple days before letting the tanks warm up, so that naturally occurring yeast from the vineyard may slowly start the fermentation. We believe indigenous yeasts make the most complete, textured, complex wines. We transfer the barely fermenting juice to 228 L barrels to complete their fermentation.

The wine is then 'elevé' – patiently aged for 18 to 21 months according to the needs of each cuvee and /or vintage. Malolactic fermentation occurs naturally over the course of winter and finishes in mid-Spring. As our Chardonnays mature in barrel, they develop complexity of fruit while still preserving their crisp acidity. This extended elevage, using typically 20% new oak, fosters the wine's terroir expression. We repeatedly taste barrel by barrel to select only those that are truly representative of the Grand

Clos terroir. After bottling, the wines are aged about six months to let the aromatic bouquet and mouthfeel further develop and integrate. We experiment tirelessly with coopers, toasts, and forests to find the barrels that express (not mask) terroir with verve and nuance.

French barrels remain our choice. The oak comes uniquely from forests in the northeast of France, known for their especially tight grain and subtlety of perfume. Due to the trees' slow growth patterns and ability to deliver a 'sense of place' with complete transparency we source from the Allier, Tronçais, Jura, Bourgogne, and Vosges forests. These barrels, made of wood that has been airdried for three years, are made principally by the Burgundian cooperages of Damy (Meursault), Dargaud & Jaegle (Romaneche-Thorins), and Tonnellerie de Mercurey (Mercurey).