

2016 WINEWISE SMALL VIGNERON AWARDS Chardonnay

Only three gold medals in the chardonnay class? Was the judging too hard? Were 2015 and 2014 less than good vintages? We answer both questions in the negative. The Australian chardonnay bar has definitely been lifted in the last half dozen years, and quality expectations have been raised accordingly. The top three wines are world-class. The next eight are excellent chardonnays that we strongly suggest you try. Apart from that, there are many that offer considerable drinking pleasure but lack the excitement provided by the top-raters.

News Flash: Don't miss the chardonnay (at the end of this bulletin) that wasn't eligible for the Small Vigneron Awards, but meets all our criteria of excellence.



2015 Seville Estate Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay This is what we were looking for when we talk about world-class chardonnay. When panel chair Bryan Currie put this one (identity unknown at the time) in front of show chairman Lester Jesberg, Mr Chair knew it was a strong contender for the top award. He didn't think at the time that Bryan would produce a second wine half an hour later that was equally good. It turned out to be another Seville Estate which, in the end, was narrowly edged out of the trophy. This Reserve wine is both intense and restrained, showing some matchstick complexity which works wonderfully well with the white peach and citrus aromas and flavours. The oak fits into the picture perfectly, as does the grip provided by just-right phenolics. (\$70.00) **Not yet released** ★★★★★

2015 Seville Estate Yarra Valley Chardonnay This wine is very similar to the Reserve, which makes it brilliant value for money. There's a complex hint of struck match to the white peach nose, and the intense, long palate is beautifully textured, finishing with great fruit drive. Be quick. It will sell out in a short time. (\$36.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.winestar.com.au/seville-estate-chardonnay-2015>

2014 Higher Plane Margaret River Chardonnay Reserve Winemaker Mark Messenger always makes a big impression in the Small Vigneron Awards through his Juniper Estate and Higher Plane wines. This chardonnay is still comparatively tight and reserved, showing apple and citrus characteristics. There are hints of almond meal lees complexity, and the palate is impressively long. Cellar for a couple of years. (\$37.00) ★★★★★☆
<https://www.higherplanewines.com.au/products>

2014 Juniper Estate Margaret River Chardonnay This one strikes a pleasing balance between fruit and texture. It's not too big, showing white peach and citrus characteristics, and the palate has a fine, talc-like feel about it. A very enjoyable wine. (\$37.00) ★★★★★

2015 Credaro Family Estate 1000 Crowns Margaret River Chardonnay A rich, creamy chardonnay which is toasty and nutty – packed with flavour. It's a very satisfying wine, held back ever so slightly by obvious, but high-quality oak. (\$65.00) ★★★★★

2015 Dominique Portet Yarra Valley Chardonnay This is a very fresh, tightly coiled style showing hints of honeydew melon and lemon pith. It's very well balanced, but just lacks a little in intensity. However, it has great mouthfeel and will fill out over the next couple of years. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

2015 Credaro Family Estate Kinship Margaret River Chardonnay The white peach aromas merge with those of oak and cashew lees. The palate offers plenty of flavour and mouthfeel, but the oak is a little too obvious. (\$32.00) ★★★★★

2015 Colmar Estate Block 1 Orange Chardonnay A lively wine with stone fruit characteristics and a faint butteriness. The oak merges well with the fruit on a satisfying palate. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2015 Wombat Crossing Vineyard Malloch's Block Hunter Valley Chardonnay Quite rich and peachy, with some leesy complexity. The palate is nicely textured, having good weight and acidity. (\$32.00) ★★★★★

2013 Peccavi Margaret River Chardonnay Shows some lemon curd character. Although it's nearing its limit, this is a richly flavoured style of chardonnay that will hold up for a further 12 months. (\$58.00) ★★★★★

2015 Montalto The Eleven Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay Almost too complex. Very toasty. Firm on the finish. Full flavoured and ready. (\$50.00) ★★★★★

The four-star and above wines are representative of what we consider to be Australia's top chardonnay regions – in alphabetical order – Hunter Valley, Margaret River, Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Valley. Others, like Adelaide Hills, have claims, and Orange is emerging, but the big four have plenty of runs on the scoreboard.

- 2015 Freycinet Tasmania Chardonnay ★★★★★
- 2015 Willem Kurt Beechworth Chardonnay (\$34.00) ★★★★★
- 2015 Sittella Reserve Wilyabrup Chardonnay (\$32.00) ★★★★★
- 2014 Palmer Krackerjack Margaret River Chardonnay (\$25.00) ★★★★★
- 2015 Ridgeview Impressions Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2015 Montalto Pennon Hill Chardonnay (\$28.00) ★★★
- 2015 Mandoon Estate Reserve Chardonnay (\$45.00) ★★★
- 2015 Mt Lofty Ranges Vineyard Old Apple Block Chardonnay (\$30.00) ★★★
- 2015 Carillion The Crystals Orange Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2015 Balgownie Estate Yarra Valley Chardonnay (\$45.00) ★★★
- 2015 Santolin Yarraland Vineyard Chardonnay (\$40.00) ★★★
- 2014 Palmer Reserve Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2013 Ridgeview Impressions Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2015 Cannibal Creek Chardonnay (\$32.00) ★★★
- 2014 Ridgeview Impressions Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2014 St Aidan Chardonnay (\$27.00) ★★★
- 2015 Lerida Estate Chardonnay (\$24.50) ★★★
- 2015 Polperro Chardonnay (\$55.00) ★★★
- 2015 Riposte The Katana Chardonnay (\$25.00) ★★★
- 2015 Two Rivers Wines Reserve Chardonnay (\$26.00) ★★★
- 2015 Brash Vineyard Single Vineyard Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2015 Rosily Vineyard Chardonnay (\$25.00) ★★★
- 2015 Catlin Chardonnay (\$30.00) ★★★
- 2015 Jarrets Wines See Saw Chardonnay (\$20.00) ★★★
- 2015 Hutton Triptych Margaret River Chardonnay (\$40.00) ★★★
- 2015 Paringa Estate Chardonnay (\$40.00) ★★★
- 2013 De Iuliis Limited Release Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2012 Curly Flat The Curly Chardonnay (\$55.00) ★★★
- 2015 After Hours Chardonnay (\$26.00) ★★★
- 2015 Ulupna Chardonnay (\$23.00) ★★★
- 2015 Sapling Yard The Tantulean Chardonnay (\$28.00) ★★★
- 2015 Terra Felix Yarra Valley Chardonnay (\$22.00) ★★★
- 2015 Mt Jagged Honey Myrtle Single V'yard Chardonnay (\$20.00) ★★★
- 2015 Ross Hill Maya and Max Chardonnay (\$20.00) ★★★
- 2015 Ross Hill Pinnacle Series Chardonnay (\$30.00) ★★★
- 2015 DogRidge Butterfingers Barrel Aged Chardonnay (\$25.00) ★★★
- 2015 Santolin Willowlake Vineyard Chardonnay (\$40.00) ★★★
- 2014 Red Hill Estate, Merricks Grove Chardonnay (\$37.00) ★★★

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- 2014 De Iulius Limited Release Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★★★☆
- 2014 Curly Flat Chardonnay (\$50.00) ★★
- 2016 Ballinaclash Madeleine Chardonnay (\$15.00) ★★
- 2015 Smallwater Estate Chardonnay (\$25.00) ★★
- 2015 Higher Plane Forest Grove Chardonnay (\$25.00) ★★
- 2015 Mistletoe Wild Chardonnay (\$24.00) ★★
- 2016 Smallwater Estate Cellar Door Reserve ★★
- 2014 Slow Wine Co Chardonnay (\$30.00) ★★
- 2014 Brangayne of Orange Isolde Reserve Chardonnay (\$30.00) ★★
- 2014 Red Hill Estate Single Vineyard Chardonnay (\$60.00) ★★
- 2015 Lark Hill Biodynamic Wines Chardonnay (\$45.00) ★★
- 2015 Red Hill Estate Cellar Door Release Chardonnay (\$28.00) ★★
- 2015 Mistletoe Hunter Chardonnay (\$24.00) ★★
- 2015 Mount Avoca Vineyards Estate Chardonnay (\$32.50) ★★
- 2014 After Hours Chardonnay (\$26.00) ★★
- 2015 Rowlee Wines Chardonnay (\$35.00) ★
- 2015 Montalto Estate Chardonnay (\$42.00) ★
- 2015 Morgan Simpson Two Clowns Chardonnay (\$20.00) ★
- 2014 Mt Jagged Honey Myrtle Single Vineyard Chardonnay (\$20.00) ★



And There's More

Yesterday I tasted another chardonnay that delivered the goods.

2015 Grosset Piccadilly Adelaide Hills Chardonnay Jeff Grosset has put enormous effort into developing this wine over the years. We've seen excellent examples in the past, but this one, in my view, transcends them all. The beautifully restrained fruit is teamed with subtle lees and oak inputs. A delightfully fresh, creamy, complex, balanced chardonnay. (\$65.00) ★★★★★

Lester Jesberg

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