

# WINEWISE CHAMPIONSHIP

## 2016 CHARDONNAY

**C**hardonnay is probably the hottest category in Australian wine, and it came as no surprise to discover that about two-thirds of the wines rated silver medal or better. We can't recall giving four ★★★★★ awards in a single category before, but the quality of the wines demanded recognition.

**Medallion Winner 2016 Whimwood Estate Nannup Blackwood Valley Chardonnay** The Blackwood Valley lies about 280 km south of Perth and 100 km east of Margaret River. This wine is beautifully crafted, allowing the barrel ferment complexity to merge perfectly with the fresh varietal fruit. The palate is long and creamy. (\$30.00) ★★★★★  
<https://www.whimwoodestatewines.com.au/buy-wine-859039.html>

**2016 Penfolds Reserve Bin 16A Adelaide Hills Chardonnay** This is an impressive complex, yet restrained chardonnay. The barrel ferment inputs are in harmony with the fruit, and the long palate is built around an acid spine. We expect this wine to be even better after another couple of years in bottle. (\$99.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.mwwines.com.au/museum-wine-shop/wines/wine-item/Penfolds/Reserve-Bin-A-Chardonnay/Chardonnay/2016/00020092260201600001>

**2016 Pike and Joyce Sirocco Adelaide Hills Chardonnay** If the top spot was judged on aroma alone, this wine would probably have claimed it. The varietal white peach teams beautifully with barrel ferment nougat and a whiff of funkiness. The palate certainly delivers the goods in terms of intensity, length and texture. (\$28.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.eastendcellars.com.au/category-list/white-wine/pike-joyce-sirocco-chardonnay-2016.html>

**2016 After Hours Margaret River Chardonnay** A delightfully complex, nutty chardonnay with both power and finesse. The palate is balanced, creamy, satisfying and seamless. Structure is provided by high quality oak. A Margaret River gem. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

**Note:** This wine was criticised in the 2017 Small Vigneron Awards for showing too much oak. The SVA and Championship panels were completely different, but both were very experienced. Obviously the Championship panel had an alternate view of the oak influence. Quite possibly the wood component is now better integrated than it was in August 2017. Whatever the case, this wine has shown exceptionally well and we strongly commend it to you.  
<https://afterhourswine.com.au>

**2016 St Hilary Adelaide Hills Chardonnay** This bargain-priced chardonnay hits the mark with beautifully defined white peach fruit and nutty complexity. The creamy palate is enhanced by lively acidity. (\$16.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.winestar.com.au/orlando-st-hilary-chardonnay-2016>

**2016 Santolin Cosa Nostra Chardonnay** A generously flavoured chardonnay with very pleasing barrel ferment overtones and a long, creamy palate. ★★★★★  
<http://santolinwines.com.au>

**2016 Stargazer Tasmania Chardonnay** This wine is cool in every sense of the word. The southern latitudes show in the fruit which tends more to melon than white peach, and the acidity is classic Tasmania. All of that is backed up by fruit intensity, texture and cashew barrel ferment inputs. (\$45.00) ★★★★★  
<http://stargazerwine.com.au/#contact>

**2016 McWilliam's 660 Reserve Tumbarumba Chardonnay** Quite funky, but the grapefruit varietal character still shines. The fruit also carries the Tumbarumba acidity with ease on a long textural palate. (\$21.90) ★★★★★  
<http://www.wineboxwarehouse.com.au/White-Wine/Chardonnay/McWilliams-660-Reserve-Tumbarumba-Chardonnay-2016>

**2016 Montalto The Eleven Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay** There's a distinct funkiness about this wine that won't appeal to all, but there's no disputing the power and length of flavour. It's a multilayered chardonnay. (\$60.00) ★★★★★  
<https://montalto.com.au/shop/16-sv-the-eleven-chardonnay/>

**2016 Coldstream Hills Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay** Although the oak is prominent at this stage, there's a lot to like. Complexity, power and structure are all big positives. Worth cellaring for a couple of years. ★★★★★

**2016 House of Cards The Royals Queen of Hearts Margaret River Chardonnay** There's no shortage of flavour here, but the toasty oak is a little too prominent. ★★★★★

**2016 Rowlee Wines Chardonnay** Pleasant citrus aromas and flavours. Adequate length and textural appeal. Good drinking but slightly light in the middle palate. ★★★★★

**2016 Bream Creek Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay** A very well made chardonnay with vibrant citrus flavours and refreshing acidity. The oak is well integrated, but the palate needs just a little more intensity. ★★★★★

**2016 Bass River 1835 Single Block Chardonnay** There's plenty happening – citrus and cashew with overtones of honey. Fresh acidity lifts the finish. ★★★★★

**2016 Hungerford Hill Tumbarumba Chardonnay** Clean and fresh, showing cool apple and citrus characteristics and lively acidity. The palate is on the lean side. ★★★★★

**2016 Colmar Estate Block 2 Chardonnay** Fresh and varietal, but needs more intensity. ★★★★★

**2016 Watershed Senses Margaret River Chardonnay** This wine doesn't have the complexity of some of the others, but it offers plenty of fresh varietal flavour. ★★★★★

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**2016 Montalto Estate Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay** Nicely complex and nutty, but needs more depth of flavour and is showing a little development. ★★★☆

**2016 Devils Lair Margaret River Chardonnay** Richly flavoured and complex, but is fairly advanced. ★★★☆

**2017 Two Rivers Wines Wild Fire Chardonnay** Shows stone fruit varietal characteristics but is comparatively light and simple. ★★★☆

**2016 St Huberts Yarra Valley Chardonnay** Quite fresh, with a pleasant textural quality, but needs more fruit drive. ★★★☆

**2016 Sittella Reserve Wilyabrup Chardonnay** Fresh and elegant. Lightish mid palate. ★★★☆

**2016 Coombe Farm Wines Tribute Series Chardonnay** Has white peach varietal characteristics but the palate is short. ★★★

**2016 Pepper Tree Wines Venus Block Single Vineyard Chardonnay** Comparatively advanced. Drink now. ★★★

**2016 The Lane Vineyard Beginning Chardonnay** Quite buttery. Seems to be developing quickly. ★★★

**2016 Devils Lair Dance With The Devil Chardonnay** Complex, but shows too much development. ★★★☆

**2016 Hill Smith Estate Adelaide Hills Chardonnay** Simple. Lacking intensity. ★★★☆

**2016 Oakdene Liz's Chardonnay** Very advanced colour. Far too developed. ★★

It's an exciting result when a small producer like Whimwood Estate tops an outstanding wine bearing Australia's most famous label in one of the blue ribbon classes.

The Adelaide Hills region continues its challenge to the Yarra Valley and Margaret River, claiming three of the top five spots.

Chardonnay is very much about flavour. Australian producers trying to create a "Chablis" style where acidity is promoted above intensity, are barking up the wrong tree. The best examples from Chablis are very powerful wines indeed.

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