

Elite Australian Chardonnay

Every year we conduct a special tasting for our judges at the Winewise Small Vignerons Awards. This time it was scaled back a little, but still justified the descriptor “special”. The wines were selected by yours truly, and are meant to be representative of elite Australian chardonnay, rather than a complete set of same.

Here they are in descending order of average score.

2017 Tolpuddle Tasmania Chardonnay The purchase of the Tolpuddle vineyard in Tasmania’s Coal River region by Shaw + Smith has turned out to be a masterstroke. The quality of this wine is such that it averaged gold medal points across seven judges with no discussion whatsoever. It’s a vibrant chardonnay that is very much in the white nectarine range of aromas and flavours. Complexing notes of stuck match and barrel ferment nuttiness add an extra dimension. The long palate, built on cool climate acidity, is a textural delight. (\$68.00 per bottle by the half-dozen) ★★★★★
<https://www.summerhillwineshop.com.au/product/2018-tolpuddle-vineyard-chardonnay-tasmania/>

2017 Shaw + Smith M3 Adelaide Hills Chardonnay After its great showing in this year’s Winewise Championship, it was no surprise that this wine was a leading contender in this tasting. The intensity of varietal aroma and flavour is beautifully supported by seamlessly integrated oak and barrel ferment complexity. It’s a brilliant chardonnay that is right in the middle of its drinking window. (\$49.00) ★★★★★
<https://shortysliquor.com.au/shaw-smith-m3-chardonnay-2017>

2017 Penfolds Reserve Bin 17A Adelaide Hills Chardonnay The powerful white peach characteristics integrate very well with touches of toasted nuts and funkiness. This is a rich, vibrant, textural chardonnay that is drinking very well indeed. (\$105.00) ★★★★★☆
<https://www.wineselectors.com.au/product/penfolds-reserve-bin-17a-chardonnay-2017/penfo20117>

2017 Seville Estate Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay Here’s a tightly-structured, power-packed chardonnay that’s still on the rise. It’s subtly complex and creamy – a delight to drink – but there’s still a few good years to come. (\$72.00 per bottle by the half-dozen) ★★★★★☆
<https://www.summerhillwineshop.com.au/product/2017-seville-estate-reserve-chardonnay-yarra-valley/>

2017 Oakridge 864 Funder & Diamond Drive Block Yarra Valley Chardonnay Everything you need in chardonnay is here – power, funkiness, strong varietal character and beautifully integrated oak. Enjoy. (\$67.00) ★★★★★☆
<https://www.boccaccio.com.au/buy/oakridge-864-funder-diamond-drive-block-chardonnay/2084>

2018 Chardonnay By Farr Côte Vineyard Geelong The attractive nougat development and hint of gunflint add positive complexity to the rich fruit. The palate is long and satisfying, with a balanced grip.

(\$110.00) ★★★★★☆

<https://www.nicks.com.au/2018-by-farr-gc-cote-vineyard-chardonnay>

2017 Leeuwin Estate Art Series Margaret River Chardonnay White peach, apple and perfumed French oak show on an appealing nose. This vintage of the Art Series is a wine of precision and poise, but it could

have pushed the boundaries just a little more. (\$100.00) ★★★★★☆

<https://www.winestar.com.au/leeuwin-estate-art-series-chardonnay-2017>

2017 Tyrrell's Vat 47 Hunter Valley Chardonnay This wine is the essence of restraint, and has years to go. The white stone fruit/grapefruit aromas lead to a long, acid-fresh palate with excellent oak integration.

★★★★★

2018 Yabby Lake Vineyard Single Vineyard Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay Although it's on the lean side, there's a lot going on in this very fresh chardonnay. There's not enough middle palate for a gold score at this stage, but linear acidity and complexity are prominent features. ★★★★★

2018 Cullen Kevin John Wilyabrup Margaret River Chardonnay A richly flavoured, forward chardonnay with honeyed overtones and prominent oak. ★★★★★

2017 Tarrawarra Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay A powerful chardonnay with attractive nougat complexity and a balanced phenolic grip. Although it was favoured by some tasters, others detected a hint of barrel-derived TCA taint. ★★★★★

2017 Giaconda Estate Vineyard Chardonnay Giaconda fans won't be disappointed by this full-on, complex version which, as usual, leans to Burgundy. However, more than one taster complained of a Brettanomyces influence. ★★★★★

Lester Jesberg

Judged by: Bryan Currie, Lex Howard, Lester Jesberg, Alex McKay, Nick O'Leary, Deb Pearce & David Yeates.

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