

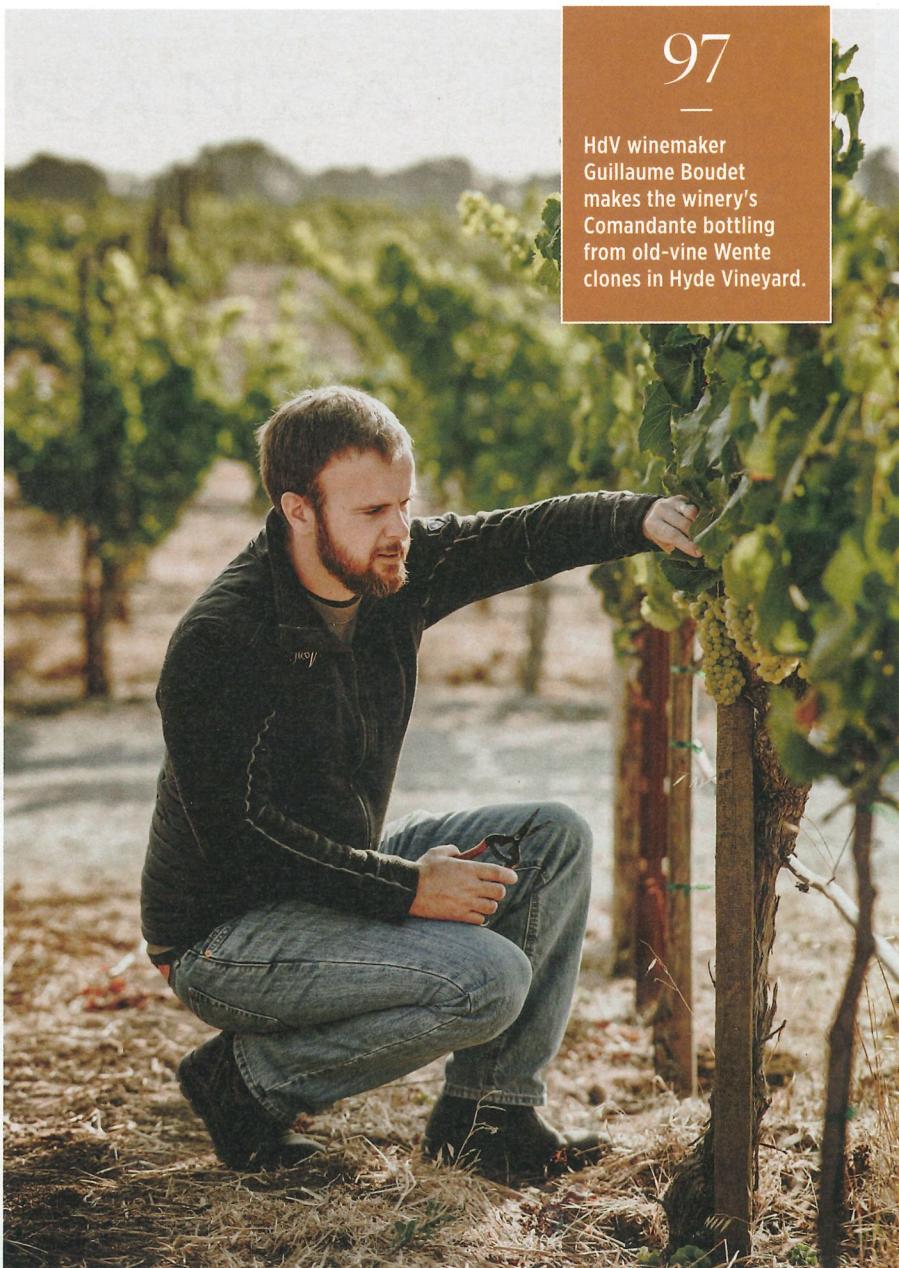
expression, sustainability and finesse in winemaking.

Today California Chardonnay encompasses a significant diversity of styles, ranging from the full-bodied, rich wines that have long been associated with the state to purer, more energetic versions that emphasize clarity and site. But here's what is remarkable; even the bolder Chardonnays today typically show more brightness and juicy qualities, as they evolved to reflect their own takes on current trends.

Winemakers openly discuss doing less in the cellar to allow the fruit and *terroir* to shine through more transparently. They emphasize the importance of precision, subtlety and avoiding overintervention—often reducing oak influence (including less oak use, larger oak containers and lower new oak percentages) and focusing on the intrinsic characteristics of the vineyard sites. Chardonnay has been known as “the winemaker's grape” for how much it can transmit the winemaking choices, but these days, less is definitely more.

The move toward fresher styles means certain cool-climate regions stand out, such as Sonoma Coast, Santa Barbara County and pockets along the Central Coast. Winemakers are increasingly turning to specific, high quality vineyard sites that reflect the diversity of California's varied *terroirs*. Regional blends are also stronger than ever, as winemakers tap into what makes each corner of the Golden State special. There is also more attention to clones—especially heritage clones—that have been propagated for freshness and intensity.

With winemakers paying careful attention to vineyard management, precise cellar work and a focus on the purity of the fruit, California Chardonnay is a compelling category now in a golden age.



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HdV winemaker Guillaume Boudet makes the winery's Comandante bottling from old-vine Wente clones in Hyde Vineyard.

BEST OF CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAY

WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

SCORE	WINE	PRICE	SCORE	WINE	PRICE
97	AUBERT Chardonnay Carneros Larry Hyde & Sons 2021	\$95	95	AUBERT Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Powder House 2021	\$110
97	AUBERT Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Lauren 2022	\$150	95	FLOWERS Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Camp Meeting Ridge 2022	\$90
97	AUBERT Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Park Avenue 2022	\$110	95	HDV Chardonnay Napa Valley Hyde Vineyard 2021	\$85
97	AUBERT Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Powder House 2022	\$110	95	PAUL HOBBS Chardonnay Sonoma Mountain Richard Dinner Vineyard 2022	\$95
97	FERREN Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Frei Road Vineyard 2021	\$90	95	KISTLER Chardonnay Sonoma Mountain McCrea Vineyard Athearn Estate 2021	\$105
97	HDV Chardonnay Napa Valley Comandante Hyde Vineyard 2021	\$175	95	KISTLER Chardonnay Sonoma Valley Cuvée Cathleen Kistler Vineyard 2021	\$150
97	KISTLER Chardonnay Russian River Valley Laguna Ridge Vineyard 2021	\$225 (1.5L)	95	PETER MICHAEL Chardonnay Knights Valley Ma Belle-Fille 2022	\$130
97	KISTLER Chardonnay Russian River Valley Vine Hill Vineyard 2021	\$105	95	PETER MICHAEL Chardonnay Knights Valley Mon Plaisir 2022	\$115
96	AUBERT Chardonnay Napa Sugar Shack 2021	\$110	95	RAMEY Chardonnay Russian River Valley Rochioli Vineyard 2021	\$85
96	AUBERT Chardonnay Russian River Valley Eastside 2021	\$95	95	RAMEY Chardonnay Russian River Valley Westside Farms Estate 2021	\$85
96	AUBERT Chardonnay Sonoma Coast CIX 2022	\$125	95	ROCHIOLI Chardonnay Russian River Valley Rachael's Vineyard 2022	\$84
96	AUBERT Chardonnay Sonoma Coast UV-SL Vineyard 2022	\$100	95	THREE STICKS Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2022	\$70
96	KISTLER Chardonnay Carneros Hyde Vineyard 2021	\$105	95	WAYFARER Chardonnay Fort Ross-Seaview Wayfarer Vineyard Cuvée Cleo 2022	\$175
96	KISTLER Chardonnay Sonoma Valley Durell Vineyard 2021	\$105			
96	PETER MICHAEL Chardonnay Knights Valley La Carrière 2022	\$115			
96	RAMEY Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros Hyde Vineyard 2021	\$85			
95	AUBERT Chardonnay Sonoma Coast CIX 2021	\$115			