

Au Bon Climat

2023

Chardonnay Sanford & Benedict Vineyard



The first “great” vineyard in Santa Barbara County was planted by Richard Sanford and Michael Benedict in 1971 in the cool Sta. Rita Hills AVA. The Burgundian varieties had found a home in Santa Barbara County. Jim Clendenen noticed the “magic” of Sanford & Benedict early on. He purchased a few tons of grapes in the mid-1980s, and since then, Au Bon Climat has received grapes from this vineyard every year; a relationship of over 4 decades. Only Sanford Winery has that kind of “history” with this vineyard. The iconic, sustainably farmed vineyard was instrumental in elevating awareness that Santa Barbara County creates world-class Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Consequently, Sanford & Benedict Vineyard earned a position in Au Bon Climat’s Santa Barbara Historic Vineyards Collection series.

AT A GLANCE

APPELLATION:
Santa Ynez Valley

VINEYARD:
Sanford & Benedict Vineyard

VARIETAL:
Chardonnay

COOPERAGE:
18 months, 100% new François Frères French oak barrels

HARVEST: October 20, 2023

ALCOHOL: 13.5%

ACIDITY: 7.5 g/L

pH: 3.17

RESIDUAL SUGAR: <0

SUGGESTED RETAIL: \$60

Tasting Notes

This Chardonnay offers inviting aromas of vanilla, tangerine, toasted caramel, and sunflower seed butter. On the palate, yuzu and lemon zest bring brightness, complemented by a refined complexity reminiscent of a fine Chablis. With lasting acidity and a well-structured body, it delivers a balanced and layered experience that embraces the expressions of new French oak provided by Tonnellerie François Frères.

Food Pairings

This wine has the acidity to pair beautifully with oysters, raw or Rockefeller. Crab cakes would also be a perfect paring.

From The Winemaker

A mantle of hard, siliceous chert-gravel covering deep, well-drained soils, combined with the cool climate (Region 1), is the ideal medium for quality Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. After a nice long growing season, the grape’s chemistry numbers at the time of harvest were essentially perfect. The hallmark of the Au Bon Climat Chardonnays is age-ability, something that can only be done when all criteria is in balance. The Chardonnay was hand harvested, whole cluster pressed and put into barrel. We fermented in 100% new François Frères French oak barrels, as we do with our “reserve quality” wines. The wine completed alcoholic and malolactic fermentation in the barrel, and remained sur lie until the following August. After racking and a light fining, the wine was put back to barrel. Barrel age was a total of 18 months.