



CLAYSTONE TERRACE SINGLE-VINEYARD

2020
CHARDONNAY

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

“From the warmer vintage of 2020, that rare artistic vintage in which the dry autumn let winemakers make unhurried, considered choices.”

Welcome to the Renaissance of the Claystone Terrace single-

vineyard wines! Both the Claystone Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blocks – like the Grand Clos blocks just a few hundred metres away – happen to both come from the extreme western side of the vineyard: a happenstance of aspect and geology.

TASTING NOTES

A savoury nose of classy fruit overtones, a perfumed marine savoury nose, a step more expressive and layered than the Jordan Village. Off the top, you can 'feel' the rocky, yellow plum stone fruit. In the mouth, complexed yellow apple and butter cream meld into striking but light aromas of fennel and aniseed, which themselves tuck into the dense, taut, satiny-long fruit finish.

How Claystone is Different from the Grand Clos, a couple of hundred

metres away: It's all in the minerality: Claystone's seems a darker, more savoury flintiness, with breadth on the savoury stone-tight finish: impressive, given the warmer year!

A word on the terroir commonality of Claystone Terrace, visible in both White and Red versions: Built to last, the conundrum of a wine both pure and wild. A broader, darker minerality, and some light anisette notes.

Drinking Prime: From 2024-2028. Thomas Bachelder, winemaker.

VINE MANAGEMENT

All of our vineyards are farmed sustainably in order to preserve the natural balance of the vines and respect their terroir. We use traditional practices in the vineyard, which we feel helps maintain the quality of the fruit and its aromatic identity. Each parcel is treated individually according to its terroir specifics, and each vine is cared for by hand from pruning through to harvest.

At the start of the season, we begin by pruning, using a single or double Guyot system (depending on the spacing and the vine's vigour). We then tie down the canes to the fruiting wire. Following bud-break, we position each shoot by hand, removing lateral and shoulder spurs for better ventilation and better concentration on every single cluster. Just before véraison, we strip the leaves on the eastern side of the vine, exposing the cluster to more sun and airflow, which promotes healthy ripening and prevents disease

development (in wetter, more humid years, we remove the leaves on both the east and west sides of the vine; in hotter years we may also leaf-pull on the western side, although later, to prevent 'sunburn' of the grapes). At mid-véraison, we green harvest if we feel our crop is too large or if disease pressure is present. After véraison, we net the vineyard parcels at risk to protect our grapes from bird damage until harvest.

In terms of soil management, our goal is to nurture and maintain a natural level of microbiological life. We cultivate every other row and leave a selected cover crop in the remaining rows, which creates competition within the root system and allows the topsoil to remain loose and aerobic. Each year, we also break up the soil (deep-ripping) of every second row, in order to aerate the soil structure, and to help avoid compaction.



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GROWING SEASON & HARVEST

2020, by contrast, was that rare artistic vintage... the sugar accumulation was slow, the acid retention was good, and there was no rot present... so one could wait for the perfect moment to make ripe wines that had great technical and flavour maturity, and spot-on sugar and acid levels. A miracle vintage! The great wines we taste from 2020 will more likely be the fruit of artistic choices, and not just worry, happenstance, and intelligent compromise. Many people love Niagara's warm years: 2007; 2010; 2012; 2016 and 2018... but for defining terroir through the early-maturing grapes (grapes of Burgundian origin, amongst others), they can be a bit round, a bit broad, oftentimes with what I like to call 'stressy' tannins in an otherwise lovely, juicy, just slightly overripe wine... Did 2020 escape this problem? "Yes, largely!" After the last frost in late spring, from budbreak to harvest, we had a gloriously-dry and warm summer and fall... Rainfall events came just when the vine needed them to continue development. - i.e. after such a long, dry, hot summer, the fairly-regular rains came to the vine's rescue, but not so often that we had disease problems.

Harvest Dates: In Niagara, it is normal to start to pick Pinot Noir and Chardo anywhere from September 10th to end-September. After the summer that the northern hemisphere collectively experienced in 2020 (Burgundy, for instance, completed most of their harvest in the month of August!), we worried that we in Niagara would be forced to pick screamingly-early, and risk making "jam:" dark, concentrated but ultimately monolithic wines. It didn't happen... Blessedly, the nights got cooler into September, harvest was delayed, sugar development was slow, and acids were retained (likely due to vines at least partially "shutting down" their photosynthetic activity in the hottest part of the summer). In the end, we picked on normal dates! Aside from the young-vine sites (read low-yielding and thus precocious), Niagara

VITICULTURE & PRODUCT INFO

Trellising System	Vertical Shoot Positioning: Single and Double Guyot
Planting Density	5299 vines/ha (2145 vines/Ac)
VQA Sub-Appellation	Twenty Mile Bench
Alcohol	13 % Vol
pH	3.34
Residual Sugar	1.5 g/L
Total Acidity	5.4 g/L (expressed as Tartaric Acid)
Racking	Once, after full barrel ageing term, from barrel to vat.

picked the grapes for sparkling wines a little later(!) than we thought we would, and the Pinots and Chardonnays (for still wines) were picked pretty much at the usual time! Thus, the cool nights of September and the summers' waning heat 'rescued' the vintage from becoming a potentially "fruit bomb" one, and instead it became a nearly 'perfect' vintage in terms of sugar, acid and pristine fruit condition. Thomas Bachelder

"Growing degree days for 2020 were 1584 GDD, and, although it was one of the warmer years, the coolness of the nights in September and October helped us retain natural acidity, and made for an outstanding, ageable Vintage." Gerald Klose, Vineyard Manager



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WINEMAKING & ÉLEVAGE OF THE CLAYSTONE TERRACE CHARDONNAY 2020

Our Chardonnay bunches are whole cluster pressed after judicious sorting across a vibrating table. The juice settles in tank at 8-10°C for a couple days before letting the tanks warm up, so that naturally occurring yeast from the vineyard may slowly start the fermentation. We believe indigenous yeasts make the most complete, textured, complex wines. We transfer the barely fermenting juice to 228 L barrels to complete their fermentation. The wine is then 'eleve' – patiently aged for 18 to 21 months according to the needs of each cuvee and /or vintage. Malolactic fermentation occurs naturally over the course of winter and finishes in mid-Spring. As our Chardonnays mature in barrel, they develop complexity of fruit while still preserving their crisp acidity. This extended elevage, using typically 20% new oak, fosters the wine's terroir expression. We repeatedly taste barrel by barrel to select only those that are truly representative of the

Claystone Terrace terroir. After bottling, the wines are aged about six months to let the aromatic bouquet and mouthfeel further develop and integrate.

We experiment tirelessly with coopers, toasts, and forests to find the barrels that express (not mask) terroir with verve and nuance. French barrels remain our choice. The oak comes uniquely from forests in the northeast of France, known for their especially tight grain and subtlety of perfume. Due to the trees' slow growth patterns and ability to deliver a 'sense of place' with complete transparency we source from the Allier, Tronçais, Jura, Bourgogne, and Vosges forests. These barrels, made of wood that has been airdried for three years, are made principally by the Burgundian cooperages of Damy (Meursault), Dargaud & Jaegle (Romaneche-Thorins), and Tonnellerie de Mercurey (Mercurey).