



THE GREAT CHARDONNAY CHALLENGE

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(Written by: Tony Beatty. President, Australian Wine Appreciation Society)

Our Society continues the tradition of wine challenges started eight years ago with Riesling; continued four years ago with Shiraz, two years ago with Cabernet and now with Chardonnay. Originally inspired by Wolf Blass, who encouraged us to start with Riesling, mirroring his big Challenge in Australia; this event has grown into one of the premier events on the wine calendar.

This turned out to be a very exciting, but challenging event! Because of the generosity of winemakers, agents, and suppliers, we were able to showcase thirteen top class wines; seven from Australia and six from the rest of the world. These wines were tasted blind by the eighty attendees, who then voted for their favourites. The combined votes ended up ranking the wines as listed below. These consumers were mostly made up of members of the Australian Wine Appreciation Society, but there were also guests from other Societies, the wine industry and some local wine experts.

This was difficult task, as the wines were all so good! The tasting came down to nuances and subtleties in the various wines, and the voting reflected this. It turned out that, with one or two exceptions, the voting was incredibly close; in some cases, just a handful of votes separating three or four wines. This is a testimony to the outstanding quality of the wines presented.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Agents in the Vancouver wine community, and the Winemakers around the world, whose support for our Society have made these tastings possible.

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RANK		WINE
1	Australia	Leeuwin Estates “Art Series” 2005
2	Australia	Tyrrells Vat 47 Hunter Valley 2005
3	Australia	Penfolds “Yattarna” 2005
4	Australia	Shaw & Smith “M3” 2007
5	British Columbia	Mission Hill “Perpetua” 2006
6	France	William Fevre 1er cru Chablis “Beuroy” 2006
7	California	Flowers Sonoma “Andreen Gale” 2006
8	Argentina	Bodegas Zapata “Catena Alta” 2004
9	California	Walter Hansel Russian River “North Slope” 2005
10	Australia	Petaluma “Picadilly Valley” 2006
11	France	Phillippe Chavy Mersault 1er Cru 2006
12*	Australia	Rosemount “Roxburgh” 2005
12*	Australia	Yering Station “Reserve” 2006

* Tied vote

TASTING NOTES: – THE GREAT CHARDONNAY CHALLENGE

1. LEEUWIN ESTATES ART SERIES 2005

Medium straw colour. Big, rich, oily aromas of fruit and oak. Cleverly crafted in combining both powerful depth with finesse and delicacy. Layers of fruit and acid in perfect harmony. Great texture and wonderfully elegant. The finish is tremendously long.

2. TYRRELLS VAT 47 2005

Light green colour. Very fresh, citrus notes on the nose. Powerful fruit and big oak on the palate. However, a beautifully balanced wine, with a good acid backbone to allow for graceful aging.

3. PENFOLDS YATTARNA 2005

Light straw colour. The classic Chardonnay nose shows in the layers of clean, fresh fruit flavour on the palate. Very well integrated oak showing lots of structure. Finishes with great length. Still youthful, and will develop well in the bottle.

4. SHAW & SMITH M3 2007

Light straw colour. Notes of vanilla on the nose, but with a mix of peach and apricot noticeable.. Lovely texture on the palate, showing layers of flavours and lots of complexity. This wine also has great acidity and a good, long finish.

5. MISSION HILL PERPETUA 2006

Pale straw colour. This wine has a tropical, almost perfumed nose. The flavours also show some tropical fruit, and has a lovely texture. Simply, elegance in a glass.

6. WILLIAM FEVRE 1ER CRU CHABLIS – BEAUROY 2006

Light green/gold in colour. Very fresh nose with some mineral aromas which carry through onto the palate. Subtle flavours, straightforward and lighter bodied than most of the other Chardonnays, but has lovely acidity and a wonderful finish.

7. FLOWERS SONOMA – ANDREEN GALE 2006

Light amber colour. A sweet, honeyed nose. The palate however, showed some minerality with lots of ripe fruit – a big wine, but good structure and nice length. Very stylish.

8. BODEGAS ZAPATA CATENA ALTA 2004

Pale amber colour. The nose had notes of green apple, although a little closed. However, on the palate, the wine was wonderfully fresh and delicious with creamy softer fruit flavours.. Sophisticated, with a long finish.

9. WALTER HANSEL NORTH SLOPE 2005

Medium amber colour. Fairly pronounced aromas of toasty vanilla gives way to a big, oaky palate. Has lots of acidity to eventually integrate all the flavours. Needs lots of time.

10. PETALUMA PICADILLY VALLEY 2006

Medium straw colour. Sweet fruits come on the nose, and also show on the palate, with hints of oak. Overall though, fairly well integrated, but seems a little youthful. Has the acidity to age well.

11. PHILLIPPE CHAVY 1ER CRU MERSAULT – LES CHARMES 2006

Dark amber colour. A nose of sandalwood and exotic spices. This is a full bodied Chardonnay that coats the palate. Unfortunately, the flavours are presently dominated by the oak in the wine. Not likely to improve.

12. ROSEMOUNT ROXBURGH 2005

Medium amber colour. The nose was quite closed, but the palate showed some nice fruit Seems to have lower acidity than others, making it a little flabby. A little short on the finish.

12. YERING STATION RESERVE 2006

Light straw colour. Ripe fruit with some spice aromas. No oak noticed on the nose, but did show on the palate. However, this wine had lip-smacking acidity, with layers of fruit flavours to compensate, and should develop well over time.