

Australia's Finest Chardonnay Possibly Found in McLaren Vale

Think Australian white wine and Chardonnay comes to mind, and rightly so. Australia's affinity with the varietal dates back to the 1830s when James Busby, known as the father of Australian viticulture, brought the first vine cuttings, originating from the Burgundy region in France, down under. Almost 150 years later, in the early 1970s, Chardonnay gained a foothold in the Australian wine market.

In the decades that followed, wineries across Australia produced massive amounts of the wine to keep up with Australian's insatiable appetite for the iconic beverage. During the 1990s Australian Chardonnay gained notoriety with a global marketplace and the international accolades streamed to those vineyards who had tweaked the recipe just enough to make them stand out. Unwooded varieties etched out a marketplace of their own, while the french oak wooded variety produced a deep yellow colour and delivered a buttery taste to the palate.

Since then a plethora of blends and other varietals captured the taste of the marketplace and Australian wineries began to further diversify their product offerings with Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Semillon and Riesling. Yet the Chardonnay is still a go to when paired with seafood across the sun burnt country which is Australia. It's not uncommon to find a bottle of Chardonnay paired with a bucket of prawns or seafood platter at any time of the year.

In late March 2009, a small boutique winery in Australia's greatest wine producing region of McLaren Vale, South Australia gathered teams of experienced fruit picking backpackers at 4:00am, armed with baskets and secateurs they hand picked chardonnay grapes from aged vines the heritage of which originated with James Busby. Over four days the job was complete and the grapes began their transformation from fruit to wine under the careful palate of chemist and vintner Peter Cap, founder of Manor Estate Wines.

"If I'd known then what I know now I would change nothing with one exception; I would have planted more chardonnay years before," Cap said. Who was to know that 12 years later Manor Estate's 2009 Chardonnay Special Reserve would be recognised as one of the finest Chardonnay's ever produced in the region.

Cap takes wine making seriously, "It's been my passion for years," he said, "each part of the process is a discipline in itself, right down to the time, temperature and method of hand cutting the fruit from the vines," Cap continued.

The Manor Estate 2009 Chardonnay is something of a legend, "the universe was smiling on each element of the process at this time, everything went right and the result is in the tasting," Cap says.

Acclaimed by wine connoisseurs near and far, Manor Estate's 2009 Chardonnay Special Vintage is now in limited supply. "Now in its twelfth year, this wine just keeps getting better," Cap says, "Everyone who tastes it is an instant fan, but now our buyers with a discerning palate are cellaring it for a special occasion," Cap muses.

"The whole team at Manor Estate are elated with the success of the 2009 Chardonnay," Cap says, "2009 was a stand out year for us with two premium wines produced, Chardonnay and Merlot," each now in extremely limited supply are reluctantly sold by the charismatic wine maker for \$249 per bottle, which is arguably on the cheap side.

"Peer pressure forced me to offer my remaining private stock to the marketplace," Cap said, "but rest assured my private cellar will keep a few dozen of this exceptional rare wine for very special occasions," Cap concluded.

Manor estate offers wine events, a romantic wedding venue and luxury accommodation in McLaren Vale. For more information, or join their wine club, visit the Manor Estate Wines website or call their team of experts on (08) 8383 7300.

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