

## **2-Pack – Morgan Chardonnay – To Oak or Not to Oak?**

**\$39 for the pair** (*regularly \$25 & \$29 respectively*)

This two-pack centers on two of the most important facets. Of the “nurture” side of the wine business – nurture referring to producer involvement and nature referring to terroir. Namely, producer style and the use of oak. Chardonnay is one of the best varieties to demonstrate the influence of oak for two reasons: the first being that, as a variety, it is a bit of a blank slate; the second being that there are numerous examples of both unoaked and oaked Chardonnay available in the market – as opposed to say Sauvignon Blanc. Producer style is a fun side topic that we’re delving into because, as you will taste in these wines, it is not simply a matter of having no oak or lots of oak, it is about using the tools one has available to create the wines that align with a winery’s ethos. We’ve chosen Morgan to be our guineapig in this exercise.

Winery style. Let’s provide a bit of background about Morgan so we can better understand their style. Founded in 1982, by Dan Morgan Lee and his Wife Donna George, with the desire to make wine that was “true”, true to the grapes as well as the region. Morgan has been leading the charge for sustainable winemaking in the Santa Lucia Highlands ever since; to include working towards the recognition of the region as its own AVA in 1991. This talk of making “true” wine is a bit vague, let me sum up: true is meant to convey the use of low-intervention techniques on excellent quality grapes to create elegant wines with a sense of place. Dan and Donna’s daughter Jackie became an active member of the winemaking team in 2018, marking the second generation of Morgan.

Okey Dokey. As with most technological innovations, the use of wood barrels in the wine industry was born of necessity and convenience. During the Roman times when travel and the transport of goods increased, it became obvious the large, clay amphorae commonly used for wine storage just wouldn’t do; far too heavy and breakable – wood barrels were just the thing! Fast forward a few millennia and millions of hours of observation and research bring us to our current awareness of the effects of oak on wine. In short, the primary reason for implanting oak into one’s winemaking is to soften edges, hasten drinkability, and impart flavor. This brings us back to our darling Chardonnay, a naturally high acid grape with great freshness and tart minerality. Now, if one adds a bit of oak into the equation, the peaks on all that acidity are mellowed, hints of spice are highlighted, mouthfeel is broadened; add in the beauty of malolactic fermentation and those notes of lemon zest have become luscious lemon curd and we’re left with the makings of a truly (to use Dan’s word again) exceptional cuvée.



### **Metallico Un-Oaked Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands 2023** (*regularly \$25*)

As the name implies, this beauty is fermented and aged in stainless steel. Prior to a cold fermentation, the grapes are whole-cluster pressed; both techniques aide in retaining the fresh, lively qualities of the grapes. Malolactic fermentation is blocked to further ensure that the wine is as lip-smackingly refreshing and pure as possible. Truly energizing.

### **Highland Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands 2023** (*regularly \$29*)

The grapes for this cuvée are also whole-cluster pressed. Fermentation occurs in barrels, 25% of which are new. Malolactic fermentation and final aging are also undergone in barrel. The resulting wine is medium bodied with a silken texture and lingering finish while still maintaining a current of freshness and restraint. True elegance.