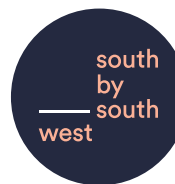


the meandering négociant



2023 CHARDONNAY



The inspiration for this wine is easy. Chardonnay loves Margaret River, and Margaret River loves Chardonnay. Our love for Chardonnay is unconditional, and with love comes great respect – a respect for Margaret River as one of the best locations to grow Chardonnay in Australia. Along with a respect for the individual traits of the differing Chardonnay clones grown in the region, the subtle variance of terroir, and particularly the vintage conditions which we're dealt. Ultimately this combines to a great respect for the critical role of winemaking great fruit into brilliant Chardonnay. Stylistically, we say the 2023 Chardonnay is a contemporary Margaret River Chardonnay with a classical edge.

VINTAGE & VITICULTURE

2023 proved an extended yet very rewarding vintage in the Margaret River Wine Region, and one that will go down as an excellent, almost unicorn vintage. Optimal, dry weather conditions paired with the absence of any significant climatic challenges or disease pressure set the scene for a moderate season, ideal for gentle, consistent ripening across all varieties. Winter temperatures were lower than average, which made for a quick senescence and sound dormancy for the vines. There was markedly less-than-average rain; however, the vineyards received sufficient supply to recharge soil moisture levels, paving the way for a promising growing season ahead.

The growing season began with a late budburst after a relatively cold winter that pushed vine development back by about 2-3 weeks. Spring saw less rain and cooler conditions than usual, resulting in a slow start to canopy growth and an extended flowering period for early bloomers like Chardonnay. January brought consistently warm, sunny days, which saw vines start to catch up nicely on their development. February was dry with plenty of sunshine and no extreme heat, provided perfect final ripening conditions prior to harvest mid-month. The cold southerly breezes blowing off the ocean and cool mornings, evenings and nights helped retain natural acid in the Gingin clone Chardonnay.

The fruit for our 2023 Margaret River Chardonnay was sourced from two growers. We combined two sub regions – Yallingup and Wilyabrup to build a Chardonnay which shows regional characters. The Yallingup fruit was hand harvested first on February 10. This fruit parcel is all Gingin clone and presented with its typical small bunches with a significant portion of chicken berries to hens which kept the acid levels up and

allowed flavours to develop further on the vine. This vineyard typically yields low, and the significantly higher proportion of chicken to hen berries further reduced the yield – but to the benefit of concentrated quality fruit. This fruit parcel has always produced a more pure, mineral expression of the site with a focused acid line, and a sea spray, oyster shell complexity.

The Wilyabrup Chardonnay was harvested on February 21, and like the Yallingup portion was all Gingin clone. This portion of fruit, which amounted for almost 50% of the blend, was picked a little riper to add some further power into the fruit spectrum combining the citrus line with a touch of fresh, zesty passionfruit pith notes.

The vine age of these two Chardonnay parcels is 25 and 28 years which is why very little intervention is required so we had the luxury of picking at the optimum time to allow flavour intensity, tannins and sugars to develop with balance and harmony. Both Chardonnay parcels of fruit delivered elegance and freshness with lovely natural acidity, from a stunningly epic vintage.

WINEMAKING

The hand harvested fruit was refrigerated for 24 hours and cooled down before being whole bunch pressed direct from press to an even mix of new, one year old and two year old French oak barriques and Hogshead barrels for natural fermentation. It matured in barrel on solids for 9 months with some gentle stirring to build some texture. Some barrels started creeping through MLF prior to winter and were cut off based on taste to provide a very small portion of MLF to further build some texture to this wine. The best barrels from these two parcels were selected in November and blended together and finished in December. The wine was bottled just prior to Christmas.

APPEARANCE, NOSE & PALATE

In a glass the wine presents with a vibrant straw tinged yellow. The nose is flinty with lifted intense varietal characteristics of citrus and stone fruit combined, and complimented by pretty white flowers. The palate expresses a mineral liveliness of stone fruit, with some oyster shell, and saline notes with well-balanced natural acidity and complexity.

Region Margaret River **Drinking Best** 2024 – 2034