

Cakebread Cellars

Cakebread Cellars Chardonnay 2023 captures Napa Valley freshness with polished richness, layering pear, melon and lemon curd over subtle oak spice and a beautifully poised finish.

Cakebread Cellars

93 James Suckling



Chardonnay 2023

California, USA

Region and Vineyards

Cakebread Cellars Chardonnay 2023 is rooted in the cool, windswept Carneros appellation in southern Napa Valley, just north of San Pablo Bay. This bay influence moderates daytime warmth and brings cooling air that helps Chardonnay ripen slowly while preserving natural acidity. The result is a style that combines generous Napa fruit with freshness, lift and balance rather than heaviness.

The vineyards are planted predominantly on Haire Loam, a light clay soil that helps regulate vine vigor and supports fruit concentration. In 2023, generous early rainfall replenished vineyard soils, while the extended growing season allowed clusters to develop gradually. Warm afternoons and cool evenings before harvest encouraged **expressive aromatics, ripe flavors and bright acidity**, giving the wine both richness and precision.

Winemaking

Cakebread Cellars Chardonnay 2023 is made from 100% Chardonnay. The grapes were harvested at night in small batches to protect freshness, then whole-cluster pressed directly into tank. The juice was transferred to French oak barrels for fermentation, a choice that brings texture, subtle spice and integration without overwhelming the fruit.

The wine was aged for eight months on its yeast lees, with intermittent stirring to enhance mouthfeel and complexity. Oak influence is measured, with aging in **30% new French oak**, while only 8% malolactic fermentation was used. This restrained approach keeps the wine vibrant and fruit-focused, adding just enough creaminess to frame its pear, melon, apple and citrus notes.

Alcohol :13,90 %

Composition: 100% Chardonnay

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Tasting Notes

- **Color:** Bright pale gold with a luminous straw hue, suggesting freshness, ripe Chardonnay fruit and a polished, carefully handled élevage.
- **Aroma:** Lively aromas of ripe pear, chamomile and apple open first, followed by lemon curd, melon, light baking spice, brioche and a delicate touch of toasted oak.
- **Palate:** Rich and rounded, yet lifted by fresh acidity. Ripe melon, golden apple, pear and citrus unfold across a supple texture, with subtle oak spice and a long, harmonious finish.

Did you know?

Cakebread's very first wine was a 1973 Napa Valley Chardonnay, making this bottling central to the estate's identity for nearly five decades. The 2023 vintage continues that lineage with **Carneros fruit, barrel fermentation and restrained malolactic conversion**, a combination designed to preserve both richness and vibrancy.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Roast chicken with lemon and herbs:** The wine's ripe apple, pear and citrus notes echo the lemony brightness, while its creamy texture complements tender roasted poultry.
- **Seared scallops with brown butter:** Chardonnay's brioche and baking spice tones work beautifully with browned butter, while acidity keeps the pairing fresh and balanced.
- **Grilled salmon with fennel and citrus:** The wine has enough body for salmon, and its citrus freshness lifts the natural richness of the fish.
- **Butternut squash risotto:** Creamy texture and subtle sweetness in the dish meet the wine's lees-derived roundness, while citrus acidity prevents the pairing from feeling heavy.

93 James Suckling

James Suckling (JS) : 93 Points (2023)

Generous aromas of preserved lemons, flint, grapefruit and brioche. The palate is full-bodied with a creamy, medium-bodied mouthfeel and bright acidity, giving flavors of yellow apples, sliced pears and baking spices. Well balanced, with underlying power.

90 WineEnthusiast

Wine Enthusiast (WE) : 90 Points (2023)

Lush aromatics of mixed citrus and buttered brioche join flavors of baked apple and pear with spices. A pleasing smoke accent follows the energetic length of the wine.

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Chardonnay 2023

Wine Spectator (WS) : 89 Points (2023)

Fresh pear, apple and citrus notes are elegant on a light and sleek frame, with elements of citrus zest and ginger lingering on the finish. Drink now. 85,000 cases made.

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