

Bouchard Finlayson

Crocodile's Lair 2023 is a cool-climate Cape Chardonnay with a Burgundian soul: focused, finely etched acidity, restrained oak and layers of pear, yellow peach and honeyed citrus that unfold gracefully in the glass.

BOUCHARD FINLAYSON
A BOUTIQUE VINEYARD

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Crocodile's Lair Kaaimansgat Chardonnay 2023

Walker Bay, South Africa

Region and Vineyards

The Crocodile's Lair Kaaimansgat Chardonnay 2023 is drawn from the **Kaaimansgat** vineyard, a secluded site in the Elands Kloof Valley behind the village of Villiersdorp, roughly 80 km inland from Hermanus. Perched at about **700 metres above sea level**, this high-altitude bowl is ringed by mountains, funnelling cool air through the vines and delaying ripening by around a month compared with many Cape Chardonnays. That extended season, combined with marked diurnal range, locks in acidity while allowing full flavour development, a hallmark of this cuvée.

Although Bouchard Finlayson itself is based in the **Hemel-en-Aarde Valley** near Hermanus, the Kaaimansgat fruit comes from this more continental, mountain-framed environment within the Overberg area of the Cape South Coast. Vines here are **dry-farmed**, producing naturally low yields and small berries with a high skin-to-juice ratio, concentrating texture and flavour. The combination of rocky mountain soils, dryland farming and cool autumn temperatures gives a Chardonnay that is naturally tense yet generous, with a distinctive mineral line and impressive ageing potential.

Alcohol :12,40 %

Composition: 100% Chardonnay

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Winemaking

Crocodile's Lair Kaaimansgat Chardonnay 2023 is **100% Chardonnay**, sourced exclusively from the Kaaimansgat vineyard. The 2023 harvest followed a moderate season, with even ripening but significant February rainfall, which required meticulous selection of only perfectly healthy, ripe bunches. Crop levels were generally below long-term averages, further enhancing concentration in the finished wine.

In the cellar, the must is fermented and matured in **French oak**, with a gradual move towards larger **350 L barrels** to emphasise fruit purity and finesse. The wine spends about **seven months in barrel**, of which **21% is new oak**, giving subtle toast and structure rather than overt woodiness. True to the estate's style, there is **no bâtonnage** or lees stirring; instead, the wine rests quietly on its fermentation lees until blending, building creamy texture and savoury complexity without sacrificing tension. Bottled in January 2023, the finished wine sits at around **12.4% alcohol**, with bright acidity (TA 5.8 g/L, pH 3.32) and a touch of residual sugar (2.7 g/L) that rounds the palate while remaining firmly dry. The 2023 vintage yielded approximately 2,980 twelve-bottle cases and is certified suitable for vegans.

Tasting Notes

- **Color:** Pale lemon with silver highlights, bright and limpid in the glass, hinting at both freshness and concentration.
- **Aroma:** Lime blossom, flint and crushed stone lead, layered with ripe pear, yellow peach, rye-crust nuances and delicate yeasty complexity, evolving towards honeyed lemon and a touch of roasted citrus zest.
- **Palate:** Medium-bodied yet silky, combining unctuous texture with vibrant drive. Expansive stone-fruit flavours glide across the palate, framed by creamy citrus, subtle oak spice and a gravelly, almost saline minerality. A fine citrus-pith bitterness shapes the long, mouthwatering finish and invites another sip.

Did you know?

The **Kaaimansgat** name, translating roughly as "Crocodile's Lair," is steeped in local lore. According to tradition, the valley was first settled by escaped slaves from nearby Franschhoek led by a figure known as Kwaaiman; over time the site's remote, hidden nature and rugged drama inspired its reptilian nickname.

Bouchard Finlayson has worked with this vineyard for **more than thirty vintages**, long before high-altitude Cape Chardonnay became fashionable. That continuity has allowed the estate to fine-tune its approach: progressively larger barrels, restrained new oak and a deliberate avoidance of bâtonnage, all in service of expressing the vineyard's cool-climate personality rather than sheer power.

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Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Mild tandoori salmon with coriander chutney:** The wine's citrus brightness and gentle spice tones stand up beautifully to aromatic tandoori spices while its creamy mid-palate mirrors the richness of the salmon.
- **Leafy herb salad with miso dressing:** High acidity and flinty notes cut through the umami of miso and sesame, while stone-fruit flavours complement fresh herbs and greens, keeping the combination vibrant rather than weighty.
- **Avocado prawn cocktail:** The unctuous texture and honey-tinged lemon flavours echo the creaminess of avocado and the sweetness of prawns, while a discreet oak frame adds a luxurious, restaurant-style feel to a classic dish.
- **Roast chicken with lemon and thyme:** Roasted poultry highlights the wine's savoury, yeasty complexity; lemon and herbs resonate with its citrus and floral nuances, making for a comforting yet refined pairing



Robert Parker (RP) : 92 Points (2023)

The Bouchard Finlayson 2023 Kaaimansgat Chardonnay Crocodile's Lair is not inoculated with commercial yeast but with natural yeast, and it saw partial malolactic fermentation. It exhibits aromas of summer hay and almond. Although the bouquet is somewhat neutral, there is a good dose of orchard fruit at the back. The bouquet appears less developed and holds back initially, but it will certainly flesh out. The vineyard name Kaaimansgat is a loose translation, or a mispronunciation, of the Afrikaans term for crocodile's lair.