

Shafer

From the iconic Red Shoulder Ranch vineyard in Carneros, this single-vineyard Chardonnay is a pure, terroir-driven example of precision winemaking and sustainable viticulture.

Red Shoulder Ranch Chardonnay 2023

California, USA



Alcohol :14,90 %

Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Region and Vineyards

The *Red Shoulder Ranch* vineyard lies in the southern end of Napa Valley within the Carneros AVA, a region defined by its proximity to San Pablo Bay. Morning fog and cooling breezes provide a long, gentle growing season, ideal for Chardonnay. This climatic moderation preserves acidity while allowing grapes to reach optimal phenolic ripeness.

Shafer farms this vineyard with a focus on biodiversity and environmental stewardship. The name honors the red-shouldered hawks and other raptors that patrol the property, serving as natural pest control. The Chardonnay vines are composed of low-yielding, small-cluster clones, planted to enhance concentration and aromatic complexity. The shallow soils and cool air currents encourage a style that is elegant, vibrant, and terroir-expressive.

Winemaking

The 2019 vintage was shaped by a warm and steady growing season that culminated in fruit with vivid flavor and balance. Grapes were **whole-cluster pressed** and fermented in individual barrels using only **native yeasts**, enhancing the wine's connection to its site.

Fermentation occurred in a mix of **75% new French oak** (from Allier and Vosges forests) and **25% stainless steel**, imparting both structure and precision. Notably, **no malolactic fermentation** was allowed, preserving the wine's crisp natural acidity. The wine remained on its lees for **14 months**, building depth, roundness, and subtle creaminess without sacrificing tension. With **14.9% alcohol**, the wine retains vibrancy despite its richness.

Tasting Notes

- **Color:** Clear, bright golden straw with a glint of green at the rim.
- **Aroma:** Seductive layers of honeysuckle, lemon zest, white flowers, clove, ripe apricot, and crushed stone.
- **Palate:** A textural interplay of juiciness and energy, offering grapefruit peel, pineapple, white melon, and chalky minerality. Long, graceful finish with a lingering citrus tang.

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Did you know?

The vineyard's name, *Red Shoulder Ranch*, was inspired by the red-shouldered hawks that frequent the area. These birds of prey are a vital part of the estate's **sustainable farming**, helping reduce the need for chemical pest control.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Grilled lobster with lemon-garlic butter:** The wine's natural acidity and citrus-driven palate lift the richness of the dish.
- **Roast chicken with thyme and fennel:** Earthy and herbal accents resonate with the wine's floral and spice notes.
- **Cauliflower risotto with aged Parmesan:** A match in texture and subtle sweetness, enhanced by the wine's creamy mouthfeel.
- **Seared scallops with Meyer lemon cream:** Delicate yet rich, this pairing echoes the wine's vibrant fruit and clean finish.

James Suckling (JS) : 96 Points (2023)

So ripe, full and generous, with a full body and a big presence. Lovely apple blossom and lemon zest aromas with juicy apple and Bartlett pear flavors on a foundation of lively acidity. An element of chalky, mineral notes adds complexity and freshness, giving a linear feel to this big, bold wine.

Vinous (Antonio Galloni) (VN) : 94 Points (2023)

The 2023 Chardonnay Red Shoulder Ranch is a very pretty and expressive white. Tangerine peel, mint, white flowers and tropical overtones lend notable aromatic brightness. Blocked malolactic fermentation keeps the flavors lively, but there's also plenty of textural creaminess. This is a fine edition.

Robert Parker (RP) : 93 Points (2023)

Shafer's 2023 Chardonnay Red Shoulder Ranch was bottled in July 2024 and was released in September. It's a distinctive style that eschews malolactic fermentation and marries barrel fermentation and maturation in new French oak (40%) with stainless steel drums (60%). Marked by bright pineapple and lime aromas, this full-bodied effort comes across as ripe and succulent while being fresh and zesty at the same time, with a lingering, citrusy finish.