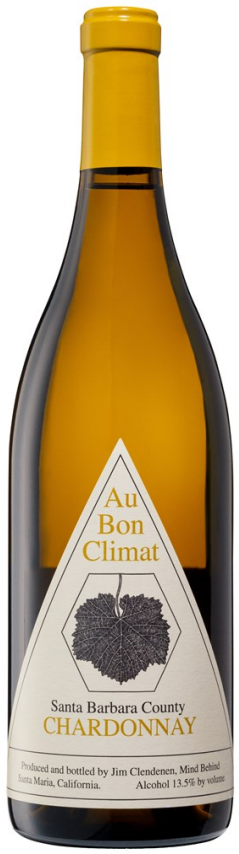
Au Bon Climat

A beautifully poised Californian Chardonnay, this 2023 bottling captures Santa Barbara's cool-climate energy with citrus brightness, floral lift, and a discreet Burgundian sensibility that makes it immediately appealing and quietly serious.



Alcohol :13,50 %

Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Santa Barbara Chardonnay 2023

California, USA

Region and Vineyards

Santa Barbara County is one of California's most compelling homes for Chardonnay, thanks to a pronounced maritime influence and a patchwork of soils that help preserve freshness while building detail and texture. Decanter describes the region's Chardonnays as notably vibrant and mineral-driven, shaped by cool Pacific winds, morning fog, and a broad mix of sedimentary soils including sand, shale, sandstone and diatomaceous earth. This natural combination encourages wines with **lift, precision, and tension**, rather than heaviness.

For this 2023 bottling, Au Bon Climat draws fruit from Bien Nacido, Los Alamos, Rancho Real, Gold Coast, and North Canyon, a five-vineyard blend that gives breadth as well as balance. The estate notes that Santa Barbara's climate and terroir consistently allow it to produce lively Chardonnays, and the wine's sourcing reflects that county-wide vision rather than a single-site expression. The result is a Chardonnay that feels complete and harmonious, combining coastal brightness, orchard-fruit clarity, and a subtle mineral line that is very much in keeping with both the region and the house style.

Winemaking

This wine is made from **100% Chardonnay**, with fruit harvested in multiple picks through September and early October 2023. Au Bon Climat's protocol remains rooted in long-established methods: the grapes are handpicked, sorted in the vineyard, and whole-cluster pressed. The juice is then settled quickly, chilled, and moved to barrel for both primary and malolactic fermentation.

Ageing is deliberately measured rather than showy. The wine spends about **8 months sur lie** in neutral François Frères French oak barrels before the lots are blended the following summer and bottled. This choice of mostly neutral wood explains the wine's textural grace and faint bready complexity without pushing it into overt vanilla or butter. At 13.5% alcohol, with 6.2 g/L acidity and a pH of 3.43, the wine is structurally tuned toward freshness, detail, and longevity, very much in line with Au Bon Climat's Burgundian inspiration and its long-standing preference for minerality, acidity, and intensity over excessive oak influence.

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Tasting Notes

- **Color:** Pale lemon with a bright, clean sheen, suggesting youthful energy and a fresh, coastal profile.
- **Aroma:** Citron, apple blossom, chamomile, lemon zest and green apple lead the nose, joined by delicate citrus-flower notes, a touch of grapefruit, and a light yeasty nuance from lees ageing.
- **Palate:** Dry, lively and medium-bodied, with bright acidity carrying grapefruit, citrus peel, orchard fruit and a gentle bready creaminess. The texture is silky rather than opulent, and the finish stays crisp, mineral and food-friendly.

Did you know?

Au Bon Climat produced its first Chardonnay in 1982, and founder Jim Clendenen became one of the defining figures of Santa Barbara wine by championing a Burgundian, restrained style even when richer, oakier California Chardonnay was more fashionable. The winery itself began in a shed by Bien Nacido Vineyard, one of the region's landmark sites.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Sea bass with citrus glaze:** The wine's grapefruit and citron notes mirror the citrus, while its acidity keeps the fish tasting delicate and precise.
- **Roast chicken:** A classic match, because the Chardonnay's subtle creaminess and savory lees character complement juicy poultry without overwhelming it.
- **Butternut squash risotto:** The rounded texture of the risotto meets the wine's supple palate, while freshness prevents the pairing from feeling heavy.
- **Shellfish or grilled prawns:** The wine's saline, mineral edge and bright acidity make it especially convincing with sweet, briny seafood.