



Hyde de Villaine, California 2008, 2009 & 2010 Vintages, En Primeur

We are delighted to present our third release from Hyde de Villaine, a very fine collection of wines from Carneros, California for which we were delighted to be appointed exclusive UK agents back in 2010. Our sights had been set high when we first tasted the wines, having been informed by a lovely story, punctuated by protagonists whose reputation was at the highest level. High expectations are however usually the most difficult to honour so our first tastings combined excitement with a certain amount of trepidation.

We need not have worried. We were immediately and continue to be delighted with the wines, year on year.

This year's offer is extremely exciting: these are beautiful wines with personality and a clear sense of place and will certainly advance the estate's reputation. The hallmark of all four Hyde de Villaine wines is their inimitable minerality and a very obvious freshness – thanks both to natural *terroir* and fastidious vineyard management.

On tasting, time and time again, Hyde de Villaine wines feel more European in terms of structure and vitality, combining richness and texture with refined, pronounced mineral definition.

Alison Buchanan,
Associate Director, Buying

Carneros

Carneros traverses the south of both Sonoma and Napa counties and it became a designated American Viticultural Area (AVA) in 1983. Its singularity owes much to a unique geographical combination of the Pacific Ocean and its cooling breezes, San Francisco Bay and the Coast Mountain Ranges. The resulting climate tends to be moderately cool and windy, with morning fogs in summer. Temperate and benign, these conditions, allied to strict viticultural disciplines, impart a delightful freshness and vivacity to these wines.

De la Guerra Chardonnay

The name here is a tribute to one Don José de la Guerra, patriarch of the Hyde and Fairbanks families, who began making wine in the mid-19th century. The coat of arms of the label is that of the de la Guerra family which, notably, won a gold medal for its winemaking at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Fair. Clearly talented winemaking is in the genes.

The De la Guerra Chardonnay is produced from younger Chardonnay vines on the estate although, in Californian terms, they are a very respectable 15 to 17 years of age. The vines are planted on the eastern side of Carneros, with a south to south-east exposure, planted on shallow loam over clay. This is aged in 10% new French oak and stainless steel for up to 7 months. The former does not provide oaked character *per se* but adds richness to the mid-palate whilst the latter retains characteristic freshness and a mineral focus. When the grapes arrive at the winery, whole cluster pressing lasts up to 5 hours followed by the must settling in tank for 16 hours. This is then racked and fermentation begins in stainless steel, using natural yeasts. The wine is ultimately finished in oak. Sadly, production is very limited as there is just less than half a hectare of vines – just 194 cases for the whole world.

Hyde de Villaine Chardonnay

This comes from the older blocks of the Hyde vineyard, vines of between 20 and 30 years of age. The first vintage was 2000. Whole cluster pressing, settling, racking and fermentation, using natural yeasts, in stainless steel is affected before being finished in oak. In this case, Hyde de Villaine Chardonnay sees 25% new French oak for 12 months, followed by up to 3 months in stainless steel and 14 months of bottle maturation – all important in the balance of the finished wine. Production has slightly increased as vines formerly supplying De la Guerra have come of age. There were 1916 cases produced in 2009.

Hyde de Villaine Belle Cousine

Named in honour of Pamela de Villaine, Larry Hyde's cousin, this takes advantage of the cooler Carneros climate, where Merlot thrives, blended with Cabernet Sauvignon. Merlot, picked earlier, generally in the last week in September, provides the core of the blend at 88%. Cabernet comes in around mid-October. As with the whites, everything is picked early in the morning, and although sorted in the vineyard, there is a subsequent selection using a vibrating sorting table, manned by a team of nine in the winery. 100% de-stemmed and 30% crushed, the fruit is then chilled for 3 to 5 days (-12°C) pre-fermentation, the better to preserve freshness and purity. Fermentation then lasts around 10 days at around 30-31°C, which is followed by a warm post-fermentation maceration (27°C). This renders the tannins more supple. The wine is kept for 4 to 5 months before blending and ageing in 35% new French oak for 18 months. This is followed by 18 months in bottle. The result is an immediately accessible, rounded style, richly textured though bearing the hallmark house freshness.

Hyde de Villaine Syrah

This is a wonderfully harmonious, elegant expression of the Syrah grape, which achieves an enticing complexity in the very particular conditions offered in Carneros. Harvest is early – generally the first week in September – and sorting is severe both in the vineyard and the winery. The grapes are not crushed but are 100% de-stemmed and undergo a pre-fermentation cold maceration retaining the freshness and purity of the fruit. Fermentation is in traditional French oak vats, usually lasting around 10 days at up to 33-34°C, followed by a short, warm post-fermentation maceration (27°C) to enhance the floral aromatics. The different lots are aged separately for 4 to 5 months before blending and the wine is aged for up to 15 months in 35% new French oak, followed by 18 months of all-important bottle maturation.



Cabernet Sauvignon at Hyde de Villaine



Autumnal vines at Hyde de Villaine

2008 Vintage Notes

The 2008 growing season was marked by extremes. First there was the coldest spring since 1970 and frost was generally a real concern. Fortunately the proximity of the Hyde Vineyard to the San Pablo Bay somewhat diminished the impact. This is a special place. The fact that the year was also a year of drought also had an impact, leading to small clusters of intensely concentrated grapes.

“The drought conditions created a Belle Cousine with concentration, spice and minerality, with tremendous length – a great food wine”.

Stéphane Vivier (winemaker), July 2012

HdV Belle Cousine 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 17+ - 18

The 2008 vintage has the same blend as 2007, 60% Merlot and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon. This is likely to be the way ahead from now on, a move away from the 88% Merlot dominance in 2006. A deep, intense, almost opaque jet-plum in colour, firm to the rim, this presents a beguiling array of spiced red and black fruit on the nose, cherry, blueberry and cassis, laced with vanilla and set within an earthy, mineral backdrop. Well-rounded, fruit-coated tannins provide understated structure, supporting layered fruit. There is lovely balance here, pure and elegant with a slightly toasted, long mocha-rich finish.

Recommended drinking from 2014 (decanted) - 2026+

£215/case of 6, in bond UK

“This Hyde Vineyard Syrah has a French soul, spice and fruit are persistent on the palate of this cool climate, mineral rendition of elegant, California Syrah”.

Stéphane Vivier, July 2012

HdV Californio Syrah 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 18 - 18+

The name is a historic tribute to the first settlers in California who were apparently named Californios. We simply love the finesse and purity of this Syrah. A lustrous jet-plum in colour, opaque, with a tight, bright rim, it exudes blueberry and blackberry aromatics, spiced with a heady dash of white pepper. The palate takes up the gauntlet, opulent and supple with latent power tempered by lithe, sweet fruit and spice, all underscored by minerals. This has such a refreshing energy about it – a lovely wine.

Recommended drinking from 2013 - 2022+

£185/case of 6, in bond UK

2009 Vintage Notes

2009 saw the third year of drought until unexpectedly there was some rain in early spring. Bud break was later than usual, so there was little chance of frost – which had been so risky the previous year. Mild weather made for a slow-ripening vintage – always good for creating intensity and complexity and overall balance in the finished wine.

“Recently, I was at our Hyde and de Villaine winery and I tasted our soon to be released 2009 Chardonnay. It struck me as to how successful this wine is in regards to our initial goals established over a decade ago. One of these goals was to harvest a Chardonnay that would express the character of the place it comes from: Carneros (and more particularly the Hyde Vineyard), but where one could also find the minerality that is so dear to our Burgundian palates. Carneros terroir is gifted, thanks to the soil and to the strong winds from the Bay, with a minerality that is rarely found in other American wine regions. Our 2009 Chardonnay shows opulence and fruit forwardness, but beautifully translates the mineral background that gives it its defining character.”

Aubert de Villaine, July 2012

HdV Chardonnay 2009

Corney & Barrow Score 18 - 18+

A rich, lustrous gold, this was initially rather restrained on the nose when we tasted but soon opened up to reveal opulent, rather hedonistic warm pastry notes, refreshed by a sabre of citrus. The palate is rounded and rich, with hints of plump macadamia nuts, vanilla and orchard fruit. Complex and layered, stone-fruit dominates the mid-palate with delicate spice notes providing additional intrigue. From the outset, this shows nobility and drive, with a persistent, pure, mineral focus which lifts the palate – really impressive.

Recommended drinking from 2013 - 2020+

£430/case of 12, in bond UK

2010 Vintage Notes

2010 brought in a decisive break from the norm, with late spring showers which delayed bud break and extended the flowering period. Summer was relatively cool, providing slow and steady fruit development – so slow that Chardonnay was harvested some three weeks later than average. In a final burst, nature provided an abrupt heat spike in late September but by then, thankfully, the Hyde de Villaine crop was all in the winery.

“A cool summer followed by record heat in September created a wine of dual character, restrained opulence and minerality, juxtaposed to warmth and richness generated by Napa Valley sunshine”.

Stéphane Vivier, July 2012

De la Guerra Chardonnay 2010

Corney & Barrow Score 18 - 18+

Pale gold in colour, this offers an attractive blend of honeyed orchard and stone fruit on the nose, allied to heady floral notes, citrus zest and subtle spice. Appetising and enticing, the palate takes up the challenge, vivacious fruit underscored by minerals, all set within a rather opulent frame. Richness not withstanding, the De la Guerra Chardonnay retains an elegant reserve throughout. This is a very fine ambassador for the region, though sadly available in tiny quantities.

Recommended drinking from 2013 - 2017+

£340/case of 12, in bond UK

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

- 14-16 A very good to excellent wine.
- 16-18 An excellent to outstanding wine.
- 18-20 An outstanding to legendary wine.

- Wines are judged within their peer group.
- A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a 'spread' (e.g. 14 - 16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A '+' adds further to that potential.
- A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.

To order, please call 020 7265 2430 (London), 01638 600 000 (East Anglia)

01875 321 921 (Edinburgh) or 01748 828 640 (North of England)

or see www.corneyandbarrow.com



Stéphane Vivier and Larry Hyde