

The Wines of the Judgement of Kingston 2020 Tasting Notes and Critic's Reviews

There are no standards of taste in wine... Each man's own taste is the standard, and a majority vote cannot decide for him or in any slightest degree affect the supremacy of his own standard - Mark Twain

Closson Chase Vineyard Chardonnay, 2017 (\$33)

The positive tug between fruit and tension is so strong it extends straight through the great lengths travelled all the way into the finish. This CCV has rarely if almost never moved with such circulative pace, in fact there's a lurching and a wraparound effect, of acidity and structure encapsulating the fruit. Safe, bound and secure as it can be in the present so that the unwind will bring more and more pleasure. When texture arrives on the scene this will have come full circle, back to and in completion of fine union. It's penitent and courteous, a function of winemaker Keith Tyers' understanding of vineyard and vine. Drink 2020-2027. Michael Godel, **(92)**

This is a very generous, polished and complex chardonnay that is framed by nicely fine County acidity. The nose shows very fine apple/pineapple fruit, lemon blossom, hazelnut, vanilla, cedar and spice. It is medium bodied, nicely textured, cool and nicely spicy. A touch sweet perhaps, but not egregiously so, and the focus and length are excellent. Some minerality on the finish. David Lawrason **(91)**

Properly made, lightly reductive, stony-mineral chardonnay here; this has it all, minus the depth of genuine old vine density or low-yielding vinosity, but the site is very promising indeed and clearly well-suited to the variety. Winemaking, too, is attentive and professional. This is all about subtlety and finesse, an essence of cool climate County limestone in a more immediate and ready-to-enjoy expression. John Szabo **(90)**

Lighthall Vineyards Chardonnay, 2017 (\$35)

No great departure from itself in a Lighthall chardonnay that follows similar lines not unlike the house's sparkling right of passages, with piques, valleys and scintillating flashes of brilliant light. Firm, taut, tense and buzzing (but without bubble) I can find no County chardonnay (or Ontario either) that acts so much like high quality, local traditional method wines. It nearly autolytic, grooving like a zero dosage and bloody blanc de blanc in expression. It's also hard promised in reductive protectionism for great purpose and to encourage a spoken local vernacular so very specific to Lighthall's (Cherry Valley) neck of the woods. Very sure of who and what lays in these bottles and indeed, only this could be Lighthall. Drink 2020-2024. Michael Godel (92)

Trail Estate Chardonnay Vintage Three, 2018 (\$40):

Here's a very elegant, refined and tightly woven chardonnay that scores on balance, complexity and length. Not overtly aromatic but the aromatics are a fine fusion of toast, nutmeg, breadcrumb and vague dried apple fruit. Mid-weight, very even and lively yet showing some chardonnay richness as well. Hints of oxidation but it plays very well. The length is excellent to outstanding. This is non-obvious, beguiling, palate pleasing chardonnay. David Lawrason (93)

A bit more than a hectare of chardonnay and 312 cases in 2018, harvested September 19th to 24th (3-4 weeks ahead of 2017, which was October 8th). Set to natural ferment and put to 85 per cent 500 L French oak puncheons and 15 per cent 225 litre barriques, 33 per cent second fill, (17) third fill and (50) neutral, for 10 months. Lots of lees contact though I doubt Mackenzie Brisbois did much or even any stirring. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. When I reviewed number two I noted more flesh and complexity than the first vintage and said in many ways it was Mackenzie Brisbois' first truly personal chardonnay. So 2018 is the next one and oh, baby. More flesh, more caramel, more body. If at first there seems to be a turbid or demure sense of aromatics, they come out like wildflowers with just a moment's agitation. Sorry to say but the vintage is just a bit too easy, not hard to get, open to a relationship without needing too much coercing. But deliciousness and agreeability are positives and so we'll just have to chalk it up to epistemic Trail Estate chardonnay success. Drink 2020-2025. Michael Godel (92)

This appeared to lack sulphur off the top - the screws seemed to need tightening - leading initially with oatmeal and brown sugar, stale pilsner and similar bruised aromas. But amazingly, and quite mysteriously, the wine freshens up with exposure to air. Revisited 12 hours later, the aromatics had reverted back to vibrant citrus and white-fleshed orchard fruit, gaining in composure and positive complexity. The palate offers an engaging salty-mineral profile - with genuine depth, balance and intensity, with nicely integrated barrel influence (all old wood, mostly 500l casks). It will be a wine whose evolution will be fascinating to track. I'd have to say don't bother opening for another 6 months or so - I suspect it will regain its composure in bottle as it did in the glass. Drink 2021-2024. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. John Szabo (90)

Adamo Estate 2018 Chardonnay (\$31):

Winemaker's Notes: From the Hockley Hills near Mono, Ontario. Floral honeysuckle, honeydew melon and citrus with hints of vanilla and pear. Underlying notes of fresh apples, cream, butter and toast round out the complex aromas showcased by this wine. An intense wine with elegance and structure. Focused, tight and fruit-driven on the palate: fresh flavours of apple, pear, plum, lemon and lime on the forefront while toasty lees and oak add structure throughout. An ageable of medium weight with a lingering, citrus pith finish. Underlying hints of apricot skin and grapefruit round out this complex and tightly focused Chardonnay. Drink now through 2028.

Leaning Post Chardonnay, Wismer-Foxcroft Vineyard, 2017 (\$40):

Winemaker Notes: Fantastic peach, pear, and hazelnut aromas while on the palate, pineapple, mandarin orange, lemon curd, and crème-brûlée play off a mineral base. A round, mouth-filling texture is balanced by good acidity leading to a long, supple finish.

Ilya Senchuk has been making a Wismer-sourced Chardonnay from the Twenty Mile Bench since 2012, but it is the cooler years like this 2017 version that he prefers to make and drink. "There's weight and power, but it's really about the length," he says. The grapes were hand-picked, hand-

sorted, and whole cluster pressed. Once the wild fermentations were completed, the wine remained in French oak barrique (40% new, 20% 1-year-old, 40% 3+ year-old) without stirring of the lees for 14 months. Such a lovely perfumed nose of ripe pear, apple, quince, lemon accents, toasted almonds, spice and that vein of chalky minerality that rages through the Wismer vineyard. Beautiful mouthfeel on the palate with pear, pineapple, citrus, creamy/spicy notes, saline/chalky minerality and all perfectly finessed through a long, racy finish. Can age 5+ years. Gorgeous. Rick Vansickle, *WinesInNiagara* (**93**)

Mineralité de Niagara Chardonnay, 2018 (\$22.95)

Winemaker's Notes: Our 'Minéralité de Niagara' Chardonnay is a subtle, barrel-fermented blend of low-yielding vineyards from older-vine sites across the Peninsula....[aged] for at least 18 months in largely neutral barrels to better reveal the perfume, elegance & purity of their native, limestone-laced terroirs. This complex, textured Chardonnay shows a restrained, glassy, slatey, focused yet rich stone fruit nose of great precision....great purity...a marvel of luscious silky texture, broad, deep flavour, and intense minerality.

Here's an insider tip for those enamoured by mineral-driven, dry styles of Chardonnay. Bachelder Niagara has just released a brilliant bottle to consumers, normally reserved for its restaurant clients— who would of course mark it up considerably. It's the 2018 Minéralité de Niagara VQA Niagara Peninsula... That wine is deeply undervalued for what it is...The attack is quick and racy, instantly mouth-watering. Then it fills out, broadens, and saturates with a powerful punch of luminosity that seems to glow in the mouth. Glossy mouthfeel, citric zeal, stone, salt, sweet butter, a touch of mushroom maybe—it's all there. Then, it tapers to a resounding finish of grapefruit—flesh and peel—that goes on for ages. This wine will astound and amaze those with a thing for fine, mineral-driven, focused whites. Though marketed as a summer sipper, this wine will lift and tune the senses 12 months of the year. Carolyn Hammond, *The Toronto Star* (**96**)

A well-named Bachelder Chardonnay because of its seam of stony-minerality that plays well in the mouth with vanilla, peach and floral accents...this one is soft and easy to drink (Michael Pinkus).

To try more fine wines from the winemakers who joined us for the *Judgement of Kingston 2020* please go to:

Adamo Estate Winery: <https://adamoestate.com>

Bachelder Winery: <https://bachelderniagara.com>

Closson Chase Vineyards: <https://www.clossonchase.com>

Leaning Post Wines: <https://leaningpostwines.com>

Lighthall Vineyards: <https://www.lighthallvineyards.com>

Trail Estate Winery: <https://trailestate.com>

