



## 2016 Sea Smoke Chardonnay

### *Los Angeles Times*

**“Admit it, you like chardonnay. Here are 14 worth trying.”**

“Chardonnay is the top-selling varietal wine in the United States and sales are rising every year. In fact, one out of five bottles of wine purchased in 2016 was chardonnay. Admit it, you like chardonnay.

Here are several chardonnays that demonstrate the range of styles California has to offer:

### **2016 Sea Smoke Chardonnay**

‘Sea smoke’ is the fog that cools the grapes in this chardonnay from Santa Barbara County. The 2016 is **very elegant**, much like a burgundy, with purity and tropical fruit, citrus flavors. Excellent.”

*-Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr, March 2019*

### *PinotFile*

“Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The nose offers a cornucopia of aromas including apple, citrus, pastry cream, crushed shells and a hint of flint. **Richly composed**, offering flavors of grilled lemon, pineapple, and toasty oak. **Opulent and mouth-filling**, with good alcohol integration. The texture is particularly appealing with a sleekness rather than creaminess. Spirited acidity typical of the Sta. Rita Hills infuses vigor into the luscious citrus core.” **93 Points: Outstanding**

*-Rusty Gaffney, January 2019*

### *Wine Review Online*

**“Big Can Be Beautiful”**

“Wine drinkers seem to have very specific style preferences for Chardonnay wines. My husband likes them sleek, crisp and unoaked, a la Chablis. I like them rich but not very rich, and not too oaky – and I like them expressive. Many fine Burgundy-like Chardonnays from California need age before I find them sufficiently expressive for my enjoyment.

When I tasted this fine Sea Smoke Chardonnay, my first impression was that it is just too big. As soon as the second taste, however, I became seduced by the wine’s complexity and expressiveness. It’s a huge mouthful of Chardonnay but it’s **delicious and very well-balanced**.

I have written before about Sea Smoke, a biodynamic wine estate situated in the small Sta. Rita Hills AVA, in Santa Barbara County. Founded in 1999, the property specializes in Pinot Noir and also grows Chardonnay. The high vineyards face south along the Santa Ynez River gorge, which funnels cool air and fog from the ocean to the west. Marine breezes and fog create a cool climate and a long

growing season, leading to wines that are high in acidity but fully ripe, with pronounced flavor.

I have tasted the Sea Smoke Pinot Noirs several times, but this tasting was my first experience with the Chardonnay. The 2016 Sea Smoke Chardonnay has fairly intense aromas of orange, orange peel, lemon, fresh apricot, toast and a floral note. The wine enters your mouth tasting off-dry, an impression most likely created by the wine's high alcohol (15 percent) and the intensity of its ripe fruity flavors. It's **full-bodied and very flavorful**, with creamy texture. Notes of honey and nuttiness emerge in the taste, along with the fruity elements found on the nose, and toasty oak notes that lie beneath the fruit. The wine's acidity is high – high enough to balance all that alcohol and richness and keep the wine lively rather than fat.

Winemaking involved fermentation in stainless steel tanks, followed by malolactic fermentation in oak and aging with lees-stirring for 16 months. The oak was all French oak, 26 percent new. To me, this does not seem to be a regimen that would particularly favor richness in the wine, but the expressive fruit accomplishes that effect.” **93 Points**

*-Mary Ewing-Mulligan, February 2019*

### ***Check, Please! Bay Area KQED***

“**Sea Smoke's Chardonnay is a special wine from a special place. I've visited countless vineyards worldwide over the years and this is truly one of the most magnificent** (take a peek at their website for an aerial virtual tour). The name refers to a marine layer that rolls in from the nearby Pacific coast draping the steep vineyard in an airy white mist. Known for coveted Pinot Noir bottlings, Sea Smoke has been quietly crafting Chardonnay and limited-edition sparkling dubbed Sea Spray. This white is barrel fermented with lees aging, which adds layers of creamy complexity. It's lush, but with an alluring streak of acidity and brightness that speaks of its birthplace near the cool seaside.”

*-Leslie Sbrocco, June 2019*

### ***The Press Democrat***

“**Holiday chardonnays that will impress: Tasty alternatives”**

“Sta. Rita Hills, biodynamic estate vineyard. **An elegant chardonnay**, buoyed by bright acidity. It's delightfully light on its feet. Aromas and flavors of lime, orange peel and mineral. Hint of brioche. Nice length.” **★★★★1/2: Highly recommended**

*-Peg Melnik, December 2018*

### ***The Press Democrat***

“**Wine of the week: 2016 Sea Smoke Chardonnay”**

“This is a drop-dead gorgeous chardonnay — complex and lush with aromas and flavors of apple, melon and honeysuckle.

There's a nice yin-yang balance with notes of decadent crème brûlée and refreshing mineral. The striking chardonnay also has a lingering finish; **it's a rock star.**

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*-Peg Melnik, February 2019*

*The Press Democrat*

**“Lobster tail complements 2016 Sea Smoke Chardonnay”**

“2016 Sea Smoke Chardonnay, **our Wine of the Week**, is **an elegant example of the country’s most popular varietal**, and it is made in the classic California style. It is buttery, thanks to malolactic fermentation, and several months in oak contribute a suggestion of vanilla, which resonates beautifully with the wine’s fruit. The fruit, in turn, suggests sweet orange, ripe stone fruit and a bit of Key lime. There’s a tropical flourish, too, that evokes ripe kiwi and Sarawak grapefruit. Mid-palate, the wine kicks up its heels with a whisper of hazelnut. If you have a special occasion coming up, and you have fondness for California-style chardonnay, you’ll love this **elegant and beautiful combination** of flavors and textures.”

*-Michele Anna Jordan, February 2019*

## 2015 Sea Smoke Chardonnay

*Wine Enthusiast*

“The nose on this iconic bottling is tightly wound and reminiscent of springtime, with fresh lily, white melon, Meyer lemon pith and faint butter aromas. It’s zesty and zippy on the palate with chalky flavors, showing Pink Lady apple flesh in the midpalate and a racy grapefruit acidity that carries into the finish.” **94 Points: Excellent; highly recommended**

*-Matt Kettmann, September 2018*

*Wine Review Online*

“Another **gorgeous** Chardonnay in what’s turning into a renaissance for the variety in California, one where acidity, purity of fruit, gentle handling and judicious enhancement in the winery are poised to cause the disbanding of the ABC club (that’s Anything But Chardonnay). I can’t imagine anyone turning their nose up – or away – from a glass of this beauty. **Elegant** lemon crème, peach, pineapple and honeyed oak spice notes share the spotlight and finish bright, zesty and long. A great solo glass.” **94 Points**

*-Rich Cook, April 2018*

*Capital Gazette*

“Winemaker Don Schroeder has reduced the oak exposure to his chardonnay and the result is a more food-friendly, elegant wine. In addition, he doesn’t filter this wine so it gains more viscosity and mouthfeel. Peach and tropical fruit flavors with honeysuckle aromas.”

*-Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr, May 2018*

*PinotFile*

“As vines have matured, the winemaker has chosen to use less new oak and lighter toast levels in this wine. Also, more 600-liter demi-muids are being used. Whole cluster pressed, fermented in stainless steel after inoculation, then racked to barrels and inoculated for malolactic fermentation. Aged in French oak barrels on the lees with periodic stirring for 16 months, 26% new. Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The nose is steely and edgy with added fruit flavors of frozen lemon, cut Honeycrisp apple and pineapple. Richly endowed with vivid citrus flavors accented with tastes of apple and subtle blonde caramel. **Beautifully crafted** with redeeming acidity and a finish awash in citrus goodness. Like an Olympic Winter Games snowboarder: full of content and still lands on its feet.” **94 Points**

*-Rusty Gaffney, March 2018*

### *D Magazine*

“Moving down California’s Central Coast the maritime Pacific influence continues. Floral aromatics leap from the glass of Sea Smoke Santa Rita Hills Estate Chardonnay with honeysuckle, peach blossom, and lemon leaf.”

-Hayley Hamilton Cogill, May 2018

### *The Colorado Springs Gazette*

#### **“10 wines worth sharing for Thanksgiving”**

“This winery’s organic and biodynamic estate vineyards in the Santa Rita Hills are known for complex, full-bodied yet elegant wines: **2015 Southing Pinot Noir, 2015 Ten Pinot Noir and 2015 Chardonnay.**”

-Rich Mauro, November 2018

### *Houston Lifestyles & Homes*

“Brioche, peach and honeysuckle.”

-Denman Moody, July 2018

## 2014 Sea Smoke Chardonnay

### *Wine Enthusiast*

“A concentrated white peach element plays strongly on the nose of this coveted bottling, with touches of sea salt and a sharp tangerine-like edge. Ripe peach and cherimoya flavors show on the palate, but a crescendoing citrus-driven acidity cuts through the richness and allows more savory components like salt and smoked nut to blossom on the finish.” **93 Points: Excellent; Highly recommended**

-Matt Kettmann, August 2017

### *PinotFile*

“Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Enticing aromas of lemon wafer, yellow apple, spice, white chocolate and crushed sea shells. Polished in the mouth with a sophisticated bearing, offering tastes of lemon creme, apple and vanillin and a pervasive thread of minerality in the background. Well-integrated acidity with adroit oak management.” **93 Points: Outstanding**

-Rusty Gaffney, April 2017

### *Wine Review Online*

“The acidity in this wine presents more boldly than its tech sheet data suggests, and that’s a welcome bonus in this delightful wine. It’s quite tropical on the nose, with mango and pear joined by mild citrus and spice. The palate starts plush and creamy, but quickly resolves texturally in the finish, leaving the flavor impression promised by the aroma profile while watering your mouth. Lovely on its own, but with plenty of stuffing for seafood or chicken dishes.” **93 Points**

-Rich Cook, July 2017

### *The Colorado Springs Gazette*

#### **“Chardonnay for warm weather eating and drinking”**

“As warmer weather emerges, many of us begin to pay more attention to white wines, rosés and lighter reds. Among the whites, Chardonnay is the undisputed favorite of American consumers. **The dramatic and seamless 2014 Sea Smoke Chardonnay**...distinguished by limestone qualities,

ranked at the top of my tastings.”  
-Rich Mauro, May 2017

### *Into Wine*

#### **“Wine of the Week”**

“Sea Smoke began Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in 1999, and has since established itself as one **of the premier producers in this region**. Serving this at room temperature allows for the crème brûlée, sugared almond along with sweet resin notes, melon and honeysuckle to come out. This is a very specific Chardonnay, reminiscent of white Bordeaux with a specific line of mineral earthiness running through it. Yes, there is an evident impact of oak and malolactic, but it is tempered by a surprising acidity and richness of flavor, an excellent mid palate expression and a long finish. Not as bright as a stainless steel, nor as cumbersome as a butter bomb, this straddles a fine line of savory notes not often found in Chardonnay.” **91 Points**

-Michael Cervin, May 2017

### *Capital Gazette*

**“Just about everything from this Sta. Rita Hills producer is smoking hot.** We thoroughly enjoyed the **Burgundy-like elegance** of its estate chardonnay. The generous use of stainless steel tanks keeps the wine fresh and the fruit pure. The use of new French oak barrels (55 percent) adds a touch of vanilla to the mango and citrus flavors.”

-Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr, July 2017

### *The Press Democrat*

“This is a blousy chardonnay with a supple texture. Notes of ripe apple, melon and brioche. The acid keeps the rich flavors in check, but make no mistake, this chardonnay is weighted to decadence. Lovers of lush chardonnays will go for this in a big way.”

-Peg Melnik, May 2017

### *Santa Barbara News-Press*

#### **“Still (Sea) Smoking after all these years”**

“It seems like only yesterday that Sea Smoke burst on the scene as **one of the most exciting pinot noir producers in all of California**...While they're not the new kids on the block anymore, their wines are still very much in demand, if not more so than they were at the outset. **Sea Smoke has established a credible seniority as a legacy producer.** Given its current releases (below), I can't wait to see what the future holds.”

#### **2014 Sea Smoke Chardonnay**

“A combination of Dijon and Wente clones that were originally planted on the property, these low-yielding vines produce a chard with an intense and appealing nose of citrus, mango, marzipan, white florals and hints of tangerine, orange peel and lightly brewed tea. On the palate, it's rich and full-bodied but focused on concentrated vanilla/lemon custard flavors with a sense of minerality (think wet stones in a pristine mineral spring) as well as orchard fresh peach and nectarine. Just the appropriate amount of oak gives it a pleasant spicy spin. **Perhaps the epitome and high point of what chard can achieve in Santa Rita Hills. Very impressive and one of the top chards in all of California.**”

-Dennis Schaefer, February 2017

### *D Magazine*

“Artisanal, hand-crafted techniques elevate **Sea Smoke Chardonnay**. Made from estate-grown Sta. Rita Hills fruit, the thought-provoking wine layers mango, orange blossom, and marzipan.”

-Hayley Hamilton Cogill, May 2017

## 2013 Sea Smoke Chardonnay

### *Wine Advocate*

“**I was thrilled with these latest releases from Sea Smoke** and when the region is chasing Burgundian-like ripeness and acid profiles, they continue to show it is possible to make rich, full-bodied and concentrated Pinot Noirs from the Sta. Rita Hills that are a joy to drink.”

### **2013 Sea Smoke Chardonnay**

“A step up from the '12, the 2013 Chardonnay is the first vintage to see aging in a new foudre. It offers similar orchard and stone fruits, brioche and white flowers. Its acidity, oak and fruit are all beautifully integrated. One of the few whites from the region to really offer **terrific texture and depth, this gorgeous 2013 is full-bodied, layered and fresh, with classic precision** and length on the finish. It too will have a decade of longevity.” **95 Points: An outstanding wine of exceptional complexity and character. In short, these are terrific wines**

-Jeb Dunnuck, August 2015

### *PinotFile*

“Moderately light golden yellow color and very slight haze in the glass. High class aromas of flint, steel shavings, lemon and butter. Sleek and refreshing, with a delicious infusion of peach, pear, lemon and grapefruit flavors brought to vivid expression with acidic verve. There is only a slight imprint of oak, and **the polished demeanor is sublime.**” **94 Points: Extraordinary**

-Rusty Gaffney MD, June 2016

### *Wine Enthusiast*

“A touch of butter warmth opens the nose to more dynamic and fresh aromas of sliced lemongrass and a wet stone, cement and slate minerality. Flavors of seared white peach and lemon curd arise on the palate, touching intriguingly on sweet Maui onion and finishing with light vanilla-custard flavor. It's a very lively sip.” **92 Points: Excellent; Highly recommended**

-Matt Kettmann, September 2016

### *Wine Review Online*

“One of the things this superb interpretation of California Chardonnay is notable for is robust peach and apple flavors, which are lightly spiked with clay minerality plus the spiciness of oak. The wine is also densely aromatic and it has a satiny, wonderfully tongue-coating texture.” **92 Points**

-Marguerite Thomas, July 2017

### *The Wine Odyssey*

#### **“Glorious white wines”**

“Sea Smoke's southern hillside vineyard is flooded with sunshine from early morning until the late afternoon fog comes up the canyon blanketing the vineyard. The combination of soil, sunshine and fog allow the grapes to ripen gradually, capturing all the fruit aromas, flavors and acidity.

**Sea Smoke's pinot noirs have rightly enjoyed enthusiastic response from pinot noir**



**connoisseurs and wine critics. But I think its chardonnay is a gem, too.**

The eight-acre chardonnay plot is part to the estate's 100-acre certified biodynamic vineyard. Made from four chardonnay clones, the wine is fermented in a mix of stainless steel tanks, large French oak barrels, and a foudre, a 554- gallon French oak vat. Like the billowing fog, the **2013 Sea Smoke Chardonnay** releases clouds of pear, buttery croissant, and floral aromas. The full mouth feel is generated from the rich fruit and two winemaking techniques: malolactic fermentation and battonage, the latter is a process of periodic stirring of the lees (the spent yeast cells in the wine) that adds body, along with aroma and flavor compounds. The buttery texture from malolactic fermentation, and the added palate weight with the rich pear and citrus flavors are catnip for those who like big, intensely flavored California chardonnay." **90 Points**

*-John Foy, July 2017*

***The Colorado Springs Gazette***

**"Fresh Fruit Shines Through in Chablis Style"**

**"Arguably the best wine of my tastings** was the **2013 Sea Smoke Chardonnay** from the prestigious pinot noir producer in California's Santa Rita Hills. More than half of the barrels used were new, but some of the wine was fermented in stainless steel to capture pure fruit flavors. I found it to have amazing depth with toasty richness and layers of fruit and texture."

*-Rich Mauro, June 2016*

***The Detroit News***

"Two words, 'Sea Smoke,' make students of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and blanc de noirs sparkling wines sit up straight. Sea Smoke's seriously allocated world-class wines are grown on biodynamically farmed hillsides above the Santa Ynez River in the Santa Rita Hills AVA in Santa Barbara County.

**Sea Smoke wines have had a cult-like following since the first releases in 2001.** The meticulously hand-farmed vineyards are perched along one of the few east-west mountain ranges in the country, which means the river valley acts like a funnel to channel in the fog, or sea smoke. It keeps the vineyards cool and extends hang time for the grapes."

**2013 Sea Smoke Chardonnay**

"This full-bodied, **complex** Chardonnay is clean and dry with aromas of fresh apricot, mandarin orange and pineapple. Oak is ever so deftly woven into the fruit; acidity is firm. It needs time to warm up in the glass to unfurl its distinctive character. A lot of handwork goes into its making, from diverse clones, to the harvesting program (some rows are picked earlier for the acidity and complexity) to the use of various-sized casks and toast on the wood. It's aged 16 months before it's bottled."

*-Sandra Silfven, August 2016*

***FSR Magazine***

"Aromas of honeysuckle and orange blossoms carry through to the palate. Rich in minerals and very elegant, this higher-priced wine is from a cool-climate region that harvests quality Chardonnay fruit year after year. Pair with spring vegetables, salads, or raw-bar items."

*-Kristine Hansen, March 2017*

***Wisconsin Gazette***

**"Location critical for Sea Smoke wines"**

"Great wine starts with great grapes, and that means grapes planted in the right location, grown and harvested under the proper conditions, and then passed into the hands of talented winemakers. At

Sea Smoke Estate Vineyards, in California's sprawling Santa Barbara County, topography is critical to setting the high-end vineyard's wine apart from its peers, according to Victor Gallegos, the winery's director of winemaking. In fact, the contours of the land are among the vineyard's most distinctive and influential features. The net result of the longer growing season, as well as a cooperage program that utilizes new and used French oak in differing combinations, yields pinot noir and chardonnay varietals of **exceptional quality.**"

**2013 Sea Smoke Chardonnay**

"The 2013 Sea Smoke Chardonnay also spends 16 month in a blend of new and used French oak, resulting in a floral wine redolent of apricots. But then oak is part of the Sea Smoke process and figures prominently in the profile of its wines."

*-Mike Muckian, May 2016*