

A Tale of Two Chardonnays

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From Estate's 2017 hand-picked Chardonnay harvest - Johnson Estate to release two new wines

Westfield, NY – Fred Johnson, owner of Johnson Estate Winery, and Jeff Murphy, winemaker at the estate winery since 2003, contend that planting wine grapes is a long-term decision which requires about six to seven years to know whether the right decision has been made. First, there is the need to select grapes which grow well in the Germanic climate of western New York. Then, it takes three years, sometimes more, before new vines are large enough to produce any crop of note. Then in one or two years, the winemaker produces a wine or wines available for sale. Only then, after at least five years have gone by, when the wine is released and the winery's customers can sample and purchase the wine, does one have a hint that planting those vines was a good decision. And it may take another ten plus years to see how those vines withstand the coldest winters which sooner or later descend on the Lake Erie plain in western New York.

The First Harvests – Hand-Picked and Then a Picnic

This story begins with the decision to plant in 2014 two acres of Chardonnay at Johnson Estate Winery. The vineyards included two clones, one named Rued and the other, "96". Rued ripens slightly earlier than "96" and has more Moscato characteristics, with distinctive floral and fruity notes. In 2016, the vines had a small crop, and as the vines were too young for machine harvesting, Jennifer had the idea to invite customers to help hand-pick the grapes. Thus, with the founder's old sandwich board which says "Grape Pickers Wanted", a Mark Twainish event was born: the Chardonnay Harvest and Picnic. It started with coffee and croissants and ended with a picnic lunch for about 40 people for the winery's first estate-grown vintage of Chardonnay.



Two Clones, Two Wines

In 2017, about 70 harvest participants and farm staff picked the Rued grapes on September 17th and the "96" clone on September 24th. In all, 12 tons of grapes – or 24,000 pounds - of Chardonnay grapes were picked. Winemaker, Jeff Murphy, decided to make not one vintage of Chardonnay, but two: One with toasted French oak and the other, a lighter, unoaked "Bright Steel" Chardonnay. These wines will be released on October 5th, just before Columbus Day..

Try All Three *Identify correctly our three Chardonnays and your tasting is free!*

Beginning on October 5th, the winery will release its two new Chardonnays for tastings and sale. While supplies last, the remainder of the 2016 vintage of Chardonnay will also be available for guests to compare with the new Toasted Oak and Bright Steel Chardonnay. If you can identify all three, the tastings are free!

Johnson Estate Winery, with 115 acres of vineyards, is the oldest estate winery in New York State and was a founding member of the Lake Erie Wine Country. For more information please visit www.johnsonwinery.com, or www.facebook.com/johnsonwinery, or call 716-326-2191.

