

The Home Ranch block of Sangiacomo Vineyard in Los Carneros.



LLOYD CELLARS

Chardonnay: Lloyd Cellars Carneros Chardonnay

Style: Big, classic California Chardonnay

Growing Sites: Sangiacomo (Kiser, Home Ranch, and Green Acre blocks) and Truchard vineyards, Los Carneros

Presenter: Rob Lloyd, winemaker/proprietor

It was fitting to commence the webinar with a tasting of Lloyd Cellars Carneros Chardonnay, as winemaker/proprietor Rob Lloyd has been focused on the grape for most of his career, having worked at not one but two Chardonnay powerhouses, Rombauer and La Crema. But in 2008, with a little encouragement from his wife, Bonnie, Lloyd took a risk and opened his own winery, the Napa-based Lloyd Cellars, as well as a consulting firm.



When introducing Lloyd, Robinson described the Sangiacomo Vineyard as an iconic Chardonnay growing site on the Sonoma County side of Carneros, thanks in part to a reliable pattern of fog and cooling breezes from the nearby San Pablo Bay. According to Lloyd, however, it's not just the weather that makes the

property—which serves as a source for roughly a dozen more respected producers—special. “I’m a Cali boy, and my dad would always drink these big California Chardonnays,” he explained. “So when I was at [the University of California, Davis,] I ran trials adding in malic acid and doing other things trying to make these big, rich Chardonnays. But then I started working with Sangiacomo and realized, ‘Oh, I don’t [need to] add anything; there’s already a high malic content thanks to the area’s [silty loam] clay soils.’ This and the use of 100% malolactic fermentation help to impart the incredibly creamy mouthfeel that Robinson noticed in the aforementioned Lloyd Cellars Chardonnay.

The wine’s richness could also be attributed to Lloyd’s use of American oak versus French oak during fermentation, which, once toasted, results in a fleshier, more aromatic wine due to the higher number of wood lignins, according to Lloyd; employing temperature control at 48–50 degrees Fahrenheit helps to seam-



lessly integrate the oak’s influence into the finished wine. “If I’m making a Russian River Chardonnay, I’ll use French, but American works really well with this Carneros style—[it’s] not overpowering at all,” he said. Unusually, Lloyd refrains from using sulfur until bottling and instead relies on the natural carbon dioxide produced during fermentation to preserve the wine and prevent spoilage, adding yet another layer of smooth complexity. The wine then rests on its lees for ten months before bottling.

Robinson also noted that the Chardonnay’s buttery density was countered by a juicy component: While Sangiacomo is responsible for its voluptuous body, a small amount of Chardonnay with higher acidity levels is blended in from the Truchard Vineyard for balance. Lloyd showed the audience the difference in the size of two clusters: The larger and plumper cluster came from Sangiacomo, while the smaller, hens-and-chicks Wente Clone cluster came from Truchard. “You’re a little Monet-like,” Robinson told Lloyd. “You’ve got these little, discreet dots of complexity and you’re holding them together with that nice spine of acidity.”