

Aerating the Sun

LLOYD CELLARS' PRESCRIPTION VINEYARDS CHARDONNAY IS BUILT FOR BY-THE-GLASS PROGRAMS

story by Jessie Birschbach / photos by Hardy Wilson

THERE'S SOMETHING A little different about cracking open a bottle of Prescription Vineyards Chardonnay. Once you've released a finger or two of the golden, rich, and viscous liquid into a glass, you'll notice a phenomenon not often seen in other bottles of the still version: bubbles. There are just a few, and they'll dissipate quickly like the green flash of a sunset, but the CO₂ is undeniably there. Whether or not you see it, you can taste it.

"The neat thing is that if you're at a restaurant and [they're] pouring [Prescription] by the glass, that CO₂ that's naturally in there is going to preserve the wine so that if you don't finish the bottle and you pour it next day, it's still going to taste really fresh," says Prescription's winemaker, Rob Lloyd. "I don't usually have that problem myself, as I tend to finish the bottle in one sitting. But if you're pouring Prescription by the glass, that's where it comes in handy."

Lloyd's sense of humor is as prolific as his winemaking resume, which reads like a who's who of Chardonnay producers, from La Crema to Cakebread. He says that one of the first things he learned in his vast experience with the grape is to keep the temperature low enough for long enough to temper the volatilization of the wine's aromatics while preserving what would be otherwise be lost at a higher temperature. "My plan of attack for all white-wine ferments, whether barrel or tank, is to keep [fermentation] really slow and keep the [fruity esters] dissolved," Lloyd explains. "And after primary [fermentation] is done, I put all our Chardonnays through [malolactic fermentation] because I want that big, rich style of Chardonnay. That's the style I like to drink."

Prescription Vineyards winemaker Rob Lloyd.

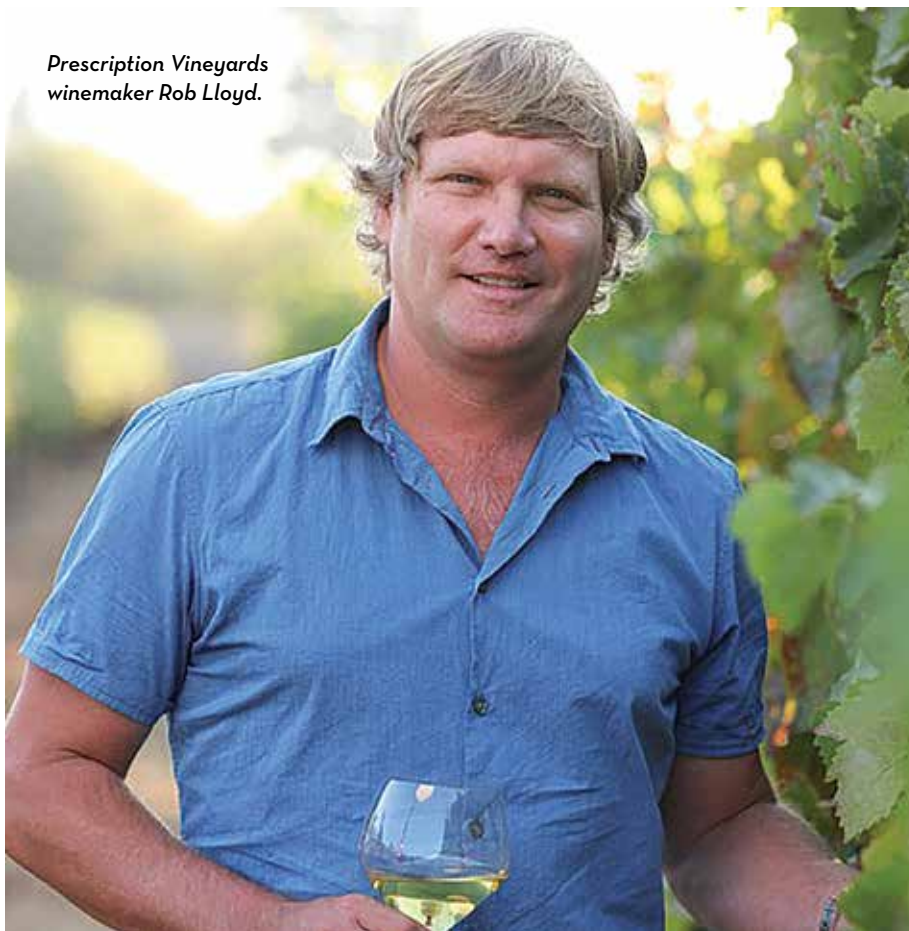


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Maximizing and preserving natural CO₂ levels is vital when it comes to imparting a fresh, bright character in the luscious, creamy Chardonnay he produces for both Prescription and his Lloyd Cellars label. "When you're going through ML, you're giving off a little bit of CO₂," says Lloyd, "so as soon as the secondary [fermentation] gets to where I want it, I just chill it down to 50 [degrees] and keep all that natural CO₂ dissolved. In fact, I don't add sulfur until right at bottling, which keeps

the total sulfur levels dramatically low. I need some protection, but not that much thanks to the preservative CO₂. Most bad bugs in wine are aerobic, but if I'm providing [a] house that has no oxygen, they can't survive and breed. . . . With Prescription I'm able to bottle at a higher CO₂ [relative to other wines], at about the highest CO₂ that most wine bottles can handle."

Lloyd will also tell you that Prescription's 100% Chardonnay, which is sourced

solely from Reamer Farms in Clarksburg, is first and foremost a "grower's wine." In fact, if you look closely, the name of farmer and proprietor James Reamer, who's a longtime friend of Lloyd's, is included in the old-timey inscription on the label. "Prescription is and always will be single-grower," says Lloyd. "James gets what we're trying to do—I never have to tell him what's wrong. Plus, he drinks a lot of Prescription Chardonnay. He likes that style as much as I do. We're a good fit."

Issei Chiba is manager and wine director at Vintage Wine Bar in San Jose, CA.



At Vintage Wine Bar, Issei Chiba pairs “the nice fresh fruit, Meyer lemon zest, and vanilla creaminess” of Prescription Chardonnay with Vintage Wine Bar’s mortadella-burrata pizza.

A Surprising Steal

Issei Chiba, manager and wine director at Vintage Wine Bar in San Jose, California, is a certified sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers, holds a WSET Level 3 Diploma, and has almost a decade of experience in wine. Like its nearby sibling, retail shop Vintage Wine Merchants, the wine bar focuses on the best wines from California, France, Italy, and Germany.

“But that doesn’t always mean expensive or the most popular,” says Chiba. “It can also be best in [value], quality, and style.”

Vintage’s wine program features around 3,000 SKUs, a myriad of flights, and an average of 40 different by-the-glass options at any given time, including Prescription Chardonnay. “Chardonnay has always been a staple for us, of course. But I think it can also serve as kind of an intro wine, which can be

great for a younger demographic. When someone tells me, ‘I don’t want something too dry,’ Chardonnay can serve that purpose for me [instead of] a sweet wine,” says Chiba.

As for Prescription Chardonnay specifically, “it’s such a great value for what it delivers,” he adds. “Being part of a retail hybrid, that’s always something that we like to consider—that if a guest likes something, they’ll want to take a bottle home with them. So I like to surprise our guests with value, and Prescription does that. It’s an overdelivering Chardonnay in my opinion, and those are the wines we like to pour here by the glass.”

