

Producer: LLOYD CELLARS

Star Power: A seasoned winemaker who specializes in Chardonnay releases another well-received label.

Presenter: Rob Lloyd, winemaker/proprietor

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"I like big Chards and I cannot lie," replied winemaker/proprietor Rob Lloyd when Leicht commented that Lloyd is beloved in the industry for his big, rich California Chardonnays. The Sir Mix-a-Lot reference might have gone over some attendees' heads, but they certainly did not miss Lloyd's background: Over the past few decades, the University of California, Davis, master's grad made wine for the likes of Cakebread, Rombauer, and La Crema before establishing Lloyd Cellars and his own consulting business with his wife, Bonnie, in 2008.

Based in Napa, Lloyd Cellars offers a small but mighty portfolio of wines sourced from Sta. Rita Hills, Alexander Valley, Carneros, and Clarksburg. For his presentation, Lloyd stood in a breezy vineyard just outside of Coombsville to introduce his Prescription Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Despite the lush beauty of the

real-life Zoom background, the first thing Leicht noticed was the label. Lloyd explained that the old-timey font and filigree design is a nod to the days of Prohibition: One had to have a prescription to legally drink alcohol back then. Also, "prescription" is another term for "recipe." "People are always asking, 'Do you know the recipe for making big Chards?'" said Lloyd with a smile. Hidden in the ornate label is the name James Reamer of Reamer Farms—a testament to Lloyd's respect for the grower:

In fact, it's Reamer's vineyard in Clarksburg that is the source of the Prescription Chardonnay. "I love working with growers that get balance," said Lloyd. Thanks to an underground water table that feeds cooling water channels throughout the vineyards, the Chardonnay from Clarksburg comes in only about one week ahead of the much cooler Carneros. "[Reamer is] using the Robert Young clone, which I really like for his area. It just gives those really tropical flavors," he added. Leicht noted the "spring-like freshness in the Chardonnay," which Lloyd attributed not only to the area but to an "extremely slow fermentation process" that preserves much of the natural CO₂.

Lloyd's winemaking prowess is also in full effect when it comes to the Prescription Cabernet Sauvignon from the Alexander Valley. "I love this vineyard. Up at about 1,700-foot elevation, it's on an extreme hillside and almost looks like the top of a volcano," he said. "So the yields are very small. The berries are ridiculously tiny." Though he had heard that prior buyers "had a hard time taming the tannins . . . we have [accomplished that] with lots of oxygen during the ferment."

Leicht noted that Lloyd's rich yet bright signature style was obvious in both wines. Blushing, the winemaker said, "You're tasting what I love doing. It's fun to make the stuff and even more fun getting to drink it."



Lloyd Cellars by Robert Lloyd 2019 Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$50) The carmine hue is deep and inviting, and scents of heather and forest woodiness are sensual. Full and generous, the palate is lathered with huckleberry and dark chocolate-covered coffee bean. Layers of tilled soil and dried flowers keep it exciting and complex. Brown sugar and cinnamon go deep on the finish. **94** —M.M.

Lloyd Cellars by Robert Lloyd 2020 Chardonnay, Carneros (\$40) Creamy notes of toasted vanilla meet a surge of cookie dough, ripe melon, kiwi, and peanut brittle. This wine caresses the palate with a sumptuous touch. **94** —M.M.

Prescription Vineyards 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$30) Grainy tannins fulfill their mission to coat the teeth with blueberry compote. This dynamo of a wine overflows with plump plum, powdered cocoa, and blooming lavender—it's really an over-the-counter cure for disbelievers of the Alexander Valley's potential for textural lushness. Winemaker Rob Lloyd overdelivers on some amazing medicine for the soul. **93** —M.M.

Prescription Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, Clarksburg (\$20) Enhanced by notes of chervil, oregano, and chamomile, luscious lemon meringue defines the mid-palate. Crushed stone, white pepper, vibrant minerality, and a spark of acidity amount to just the right Rx for great food pairing. **92** —M.M.