

LOUW WINES

Elham Valley

CHARDONNAY 2023

Alcohol	13%	Clones	548 & 121
TA	7.7 g/l	Malolactic	Complete
pH	3.03	Oak Maturation	15 months old French oak

VINEYARD

The grapes for this wine come from a single vineyard situated in the Elham Valley, an area defined by its predominantly chalk and flint-rich soils. This site forms part of the same iconic chalk ridge that runs from Champagne through Burgundy and into southern England, offering ideal conditions for growing high-quality Chardonnay. The vineyard lies on gentle, south-facing slopes at an elevation just under 100 metres, approximately 8 miles from the sea.

VINTAGE

The 2023 growing season was near-perfect in Elham Valley, Kent. Spring saw minimal frost, followed by flowering in June. Although July and August were cooler and wetter than average, extended warmth and sunshine in September and October brought excellent ripening conditions. While many vineyards across the UK reported record-breaking yields, this particular site in the Elham Valley produced a more moderate crop. The lower yield contributed to greater concentration.

HARVEST

Chardonnay clones 548 and 121 were hand-harvested in the early hours of October 22nd. The fruit was carefully selected by ourselves, along with a close friend, Renier Botha, to ensure only the highest quality and healthiest bunches were picked. Special attention was given to sorting, allowing us to work exclusively with pristine grapes.

VINIFICATION

Whole bunches were gently pressed to achieve a delicate extraction, preserving the purest expression of the fruit's aroma. The juice was settled in tank for 48 hours before being racked off the gross lees. Fermentation began naturally as the must warmed, and midway through, we inoculated with a Burgundian yeast strain to ensure a clean and complete fermentation, enhancing aromatic complexity. Following primary fermentation, the wine was transferred to a third-fill French oak barrel with a light toast. Full malolactic fermentation (MLF) was allowed to take place, adding richness and softening the wine's natural acidity. During this stage, weekly bâtonnage was performed to encourage successful MLF. Post-MLF, the wine remained in barrel on the lees for 15 months with regular topping to maintain freshness. During this ageing period, bâtonnage was carried out three additional times to build further complexity and a subtle creaminess.

BOTTLING

After 15 months in barrel, the wine was racked and lightly filtered before being bottled on February 1st, 2025. All bottling, including corking, was done by hand.

TASTING NOTES

Vibrant aromas of fresh pineapple and honeysuckle, with hints of honey. Silky, creamy texture with subtle depth.

