

Floodgate – Chardonnay, Floodgate Estate, Russian River Valley

- Single vineyard Russian River Valley chardonnay at an exceptional value
- From organically farmed vineyard in the heart of the Middle Reach
 - Small production

The Producer

It's a familiar story in Europe but almost unheard of in the US: Grandchildren grow up in the family's vineyards; take the reins as young adults; convert to organic farming and bring the vineyards into their full glory. Yet that is exactly the story of Woody Hambrecht and Alysian Wines.

Woody's grandfather Bill Hambrecht got in the grape growing business in the 1970s, purchasing vineyards such as Floodgate in Anderson Valley and Grist in Dry Creek. His plan was to grow grapes for big wineries but they soon learned what high achieving sites they had. By the 1990s the best of the best wineries were sourcing Grist fruit including Chalone, Ridge, Ehren Jordan, Orin Swift, and Gary Farrell. Some sites were sold off to premium producers – Floodgate was sold to Duckhorn – but Grist stayed in the family.

While Grist was coming into its own, young Woody was in elementary school and absorbing all he could about winegrowing. He learned about farming from the vineyard crew, and harvesting and winemaking from all the talented winemakers who sourced from Grist.

His learning curve grew in 2006, when Bill Hambrecht teamed up with winemaker Gary Farrell to form Alysian wines. The project focused on tiny and exclusive lots of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from the Hambrecht's and other marquee vineyards. They chose the name Alysian to symbolize their quest for creativity guided by intuition.

By 2013, Bill and Gary were ready to retire. Woody, then 30 years old, took the reins of Alysian as well as Grist Vineyard, to usher in a new period for the project. Now Woody lives on the Grist property in a small cabin, overseeing all of the farming and making all the Alysian wines himself. Grist continues to be a key source for longstanding customers (including The Prisoner) as well as for Alysian bottlings.

Carrying on the original idea of a journey and intuition, Woody has also created a value label called Floodgate, which features outstanding wine at an every day price. By leveraging his vast network of vineyards and winemakers, he is able to source outstanding declassified barrels and surplus fruit for Floodgate bottlings. Current offerings include pinot noir, chardonnay and a white blend.

The Wine

This Chardonnay has so many reasons to love it. First, it has all the quality markers. Single vineyard? yes. Harvesting by hand? yes. Moderate percentage of oak? yes. Second, it has pedigree. The fruit comes from the Floodgate vineyard, next to Ritchie Vineyard, an icon of Russian River. Third, it gives the full experience you want from great wines and great winemaking. When you get the wine in the glass, the aromatics, texture and finish all show good breeding. It's what you want from RRV chardonnay, a kiss, not over the top butter, and not too acidic.



Appellation: Russian River Valley

Varietal: 100% Chardonnay

Vinification: Clones: 4, 76, and 95 Harvested at night and hand sorted in the vineyard

Aging: 11 months in French oak, 30% new

Tasting note: Baked apple crisp, lemon blossom, creamy texture with a lifted, refreshing finish.