HILL FAMILY
ESTATE

2024 Reserve Chardonnay

Production: 195 cases
Composition: 100% Chardonnay
Vineyards: NGA, Stewart and Dunlap
Appellation: Napa Valley
Elevation: Foothills about 500 ft, and rolling hills
Cooperage: 9 months in 75% new oak barrels (Francois Freres TG M+ 3 yr and VSG 3 yr)
Alcohol: 14.5%, TA 5.8, pH 3.54
Bottling date: June 6, 2025
Release date: Winter 2026
Release price: $65.00

2024 was another great year for making Reserve Chardonnay. Plenty of winter rains pushed the season a bit later in the year, and the grapes seemed in no rush to ripen, in part to generous crop levels. But rollercoaster weather with temperatures peaking at over 100 degrees for a few days pushed the vines along and caused them to catch up with more normal harvest dates. We brought in the first NGA Wente clone block and the Stewart Dunlap lot on September 30 just before another hot spell. Then on October 4, we brought in NGA Block 3, with lots of the citrus and tropical flavors that had built up nicely with all of the hang time. All lots were whole cluster pressed very early in the morning, settled, racked, and inoculated for barrel fermentation. In early December, the reserve lot was racked clean and inoculated with ML culture, to develop the rich slightly buttery notes. It remained in barrel until racking for bottling.

Winemaker Kari Auringer's tasting notes:

The 2024 Reserve Chardonnay is barrel fermented and aged in French oak barrels. The barrel helps develop the wine through wood contact, micro-oxygenation, and interaction with spent yeast cells (lees). We hand-stir each barrel (Bâtonnage) once a week during the ageing process to suspend the lees which gives the wine a rich, creamy texture and aromas of toasty oak with a hint of vanilla. The barrel also encourages malolactic fermentation (the process of converting sharp malic acid into softer lactic acid), contributing to a smoother, rounder, creamier finish.