

'MA PRINCESSE'  
A CLASSIC CHARDONNAY  
CLEARLY DEDICATED TO  
OUR DAUGHTER CLAIRE

by Jodie Morlet



MORLET  
*Family Vineyards*

*Spring Newsletter 2024*

ISSUE XX

*W* DISCOVERING A DISCERNING PALATE

hen our son Paul turned one, Luc put his finger in a flute of Champagne and put a little taste on Paul's tongue. I was immediately in shock, wondering why my husband was giving our little boy alcohol! Luc explained that it was a tradition in his native Champagne. So... by the time that our daughter Claire turned one (two years later), I wasn't surprised at all!

Growing up in the Napa Valley as the daughter of a fifth-generation French winemaker, Claire had little choice but to spend much of her childhood exploring vineyards. From the time that she and Paul could walk, Luc shared his knowledge and passion about viticulture and winemaking with our children. (He also spoke only in French to them!) Claire first viewed Peter Michael Winery's Pisoni block from atop her dad's shoulders, while Paul bore witness to a brown bear in Peter Michael's 'Les Pavots' vineyard! Over the years, both of our children helped Luc, their "Papa", whenever time permitted outside of school,

studying, soccer and volleyball matches, dance lessons, and robotics tournaments.

As Paul and Claire got older, Luc created obstacle courses in the winery's



*Claire Morlet holds Chardonnay Old Wente clusters from the inaugural 2007 vintage of 'Ma Princesse'*

parking lot on weekends to teach them how to drive a forklift, and during harvest, they assisted with punchdowns and any other task that was needed. They helped to plant both the hillside block at our 'Morlet Estate' vineyard in St. Helena as well as our 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard in Oakville.

From time to time, both of our children were given a small amount of wine. (When they were quite young, it was always diluted with water.) In 2007, when Claire was seven years old, we named our 'Ma Princesse' Chardonnay in her honor, and from that moment on, she was convinced that she only liked Chardonnay wines. I thought that she would just be a clever marketer one day! However, when she was 11 ½ years old, we traveled to France. While visiting family in Champagne, Luc's father Eric gave us a tasting of still wines in tanks. Prior to undergoing the *Méthode Champenoise*, these wines are literally called *vins clairs*! The first tank was a Chardonnay. Claire took a little sip and a big smile emerged. The second tank also contained a white

wine. Claire took a small taste and immediately had a look of disappointment on her face. When I asked her if she was okay, she replied, "Mom, I thought that I loved



*Left, Claire is concerned about a cluster eaten by birds, 2003*



*Center, Claire helps with the green harvest (crop thinning), 2004 Top right, On a very windy day, Claire holds a Pinot Noir cluster from Peter Michael Winery's Pisoni block atop her dad's shoulders, 2005*



*Bottom, Claire plays inside an empty French oak puncheon, 2008*

all Chardonnays, but I don't like this one at all!" When I explained that the second wine was a Pinot Noir that hadn't had any contact with the skin, she exclaimed, "Well, that explains it!" It was on that day that I discovered that our daughter had not only inherited Luc's French accent, but his discerning palate as well! (Claire would later grow to enjoy all varietals, although she still prefers the wine named in her honor.)

#### EUROPEAN "VACATIONS"

Claire has had many wonderful opportunities to travel to Europe. In 2016, Luc took her to Grasse, France where she learned the techniques for crafting perfume. She named her creation 'Le Premier' partly because it was her





*Claire learns to drive a forklift, 2012*



*Paul and Claire carry out punchdowns, 2013*



*Claire helps plant the hillside block at the 'Morlet Estate' vineyard, 2016*

first time making perfume, and partly because her Papa was also creating a perfume, and she wanted hers to be the best (*Le Premier!*).

As they traveled through the southeast of France, they dined at three-Michelin-starred Chef Anne-Sophie Pic's Maison Pic in Valence. Chef Pic has earned an astounding ten Michelin stars across her restaurants! While Luc reminisces about discussing with Chef the balance between respecting her father and grandfather's legacy with creating her own style, Claire remembers how much she had loved the dessert!

Luc and Claire then journeyed to Portugal to visit our cork supplier. Claire was able to observe the cork harvest in the forest near Lisbon and visit the company's plant near Oporto. While there, she learned how our corks are hand sorted to ensure the highest quality and also undergo the innovative One by One™ testing. (This automated process utilizes cutting edge gas phase spectroscopy which allows each individual cork to be tested prior to being branded with our winery's logo. Corks that prove to be 100% TCA free, as well as void of any other "off-aroma" molecule, meet the standard

for our wines. Any cork that does not pass is rejected.)

During her senior year at the University of San Diego, Claire studied abroad in Aix-en-Provence as a requirement for her double-bachelor's program in Business Administration & International Business and in French & Francophone studies. This time away allowed her to explore even more of Europe, including Austria, Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Monaco, Slovakia, Spain, the Netherlands, and Vatican City. She was also able to visit her grandparents in Champagne twice, which made them very happy!



*Claire drives through the newly planted 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard, 2015*

Last spring, Claire graduated Magna cum Laude from USD. In addition, she received the highest honors in both the business and French departments. She is currently earning a Master of Science in Business Analytics. Throughout her undergraduate years, she worked as the Director of Marketing for the school's International Business Club, served as a student leader for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and was an intern in Marketing & Business Development for the San Diego French American Chamber of Commerce as well as for the Institute for American Universities. After graduation, Claire was the Marketing Associate for the Brink Small Business Development Center. As part of her current master's pro-

gram, Claire recently traveled to Melbourne to serve as an international consultant for an Australian company, allowing her to apply academic knowledge to real-world challenges. She enjoyed exploring Australia, too! Needless to say, we are incredibly proud of her accomplishments.

#### A COMPLEX & CONCENTRATED CHARDONNAY

When deciding to craft the inaugural vintage of the 'Ma Princesse' Chardonnay, Luc signed a long-term, per-acre lease on the renowned Ritchie Vineyard in Russian River Valley. This hillside vineyard (35-135 feet elevation) benefits from cool nights and morning fog. The presence of metamorphic rocks, mixed with Goldridge soil, pro-



*Claire learns to craft perfume in Grasse, Provence 2016*



*Three-Michelin-starred Chef Anne-Sophie Pic spends time with Luc & Claire, Valence, 2016*



Luc & Claire stand near a pile of cork planks that has been assigned a final quality grade, Portugal, 2016



Claire visits Amsterdam during her study abroad program, 2022

vides extra minerality, and thus, amazing complexity, to the wine. The vineyard is planted with the Old Wente field selection. Luc favors this specific *sélection massale* because of the typical “chicks and hens” (small and larger berries in the same cluster) profile. The Old Wente grapes (named after C. H. Wente who is credited with bringing this clone from Burgundy in 1912) have an aptitude for expressing the *terroir* of the specific vineyard site. Smaller yields, along with a high solid to liquid ratio, lead to a natural concentration and mineral character and add, as Luc states with a wink in his eye, a certain *je-ne-sais-quoi* to the finished wine. It was the petite size of these Chardonnay berries that first inspired us to name the wine in honor of our daughter.

#### THE HIGHEST ACCOLADES

Prior to moving to California, Luc worked as a winemaker in Bordeaux, but also in Burgundy. So, it is no surprise that over the years, the ‘Ma Princesse’ Chardonnay has earned the highest accolades. The 2018 vintage received 100 points by Jeb Dunnuck! Mr. Dunnuck proclaimed, “picking a favorite from Morlet’s Chardonnays is just about impossible, but this is incredible juice that tops out on my scale. Enjoy this heavenly Chardonnay any time over the coming decade or more!”

Robert Parker awarded the 2013 vintage with 98 points and declared that it is a “profound full-bodied wine with a Bâtard-Montrachet-like richness and intensity as

well as background minerality.” He added, “Luc Morlet is not only a fabulous winemaking talent, he knows how to bring the French *savoir-faire* of complexity, elegance and precision to the ripe, concentrated, intense fruit of California. His Chardonnay is about as good as wines made from [this varietal] can be... Morlet is on a hot streak in terms of the quality of the exquisite wines he’s producing. This is an extraordinary Chardonnay!”

Not to be outshone, the 2016 and 2017 vintages also received 98 points. Jeb Dunnuck announced that the 2016 “is another sensational effort from Luc Morlet. Honey-suckle, marzipan, caramelized citrus, and hints of tangerine all flow to a powerful, deep, concentrated Chardonnay



*Mount St. Helena overlooks the vines for our 'Ma Princesse' Chardonnay, Russian River Valley*

that's classic Russian River Valley all the way." Lisa Perrotti-Brown described our 2017 as having "delicate notes of lemon meringue pie, white peaches and lime leaves plus emerging nuances of wet slate, paraffin wax, struck flint and croissant with a waft of praline. Medium to full-bodied, the palate is tightly wound and packed with taut citrus and mineral layers, framed by a fantastic freshness and a satiny texture, finishing wonderfully tangy."

'Ma Princesse' pairs beautifully with a variety of dishes. In March of 2017, Luc hosted a wine dinner at the Forbes four-starred The Langham Huntington where the Chardonnay was featured alongside a grilled monkfish with spring peas. In July of that same year, our family was the honorary vintner at Disney's Club 33 for the 50th anniversary celebration. This wine highlighted Executive Chef Andrew Sutton's sautéed wild turbot and lobster pine nut risotto. Claire personally signed a bottle to keep on display at the club! The 'Ma Princesse' was served with Alaskan King crab meat and poached oysters and mussels during a

*Left, The Old Wente field selection is characterized by the "chicks and hens" size of berries*

*Right, 'Ma Princesse' harvest, fall 2022*





dinner at the Collier's Reserve Country Club in Naples, Florida. Luc recommends serving the wine at 55-59°F. A few of the many dishes with which Luc has personally enjoyed this wine include pork belly with vegetable ragout, Maine lobster, scampi risotto, Hamachi sashimi, and a crab & melted leek pot pie that was served with Chardonnay cream, of course! The 'Ma Princesse' Chardonnay can also be found on the wine lists of premium restaurants across the country including Michelin-starred Jeune et Jolie in Carlsbad, California and Rocca in Tampa, Florida.

#### RAISE A GLASS

Outside of school, Claire has represented our winery at various wine events. And... although she presents our entire portfolio skillfully, when work is done, she can be found enjoying, what else... the 'Ma Princesse' Chardonnay! Luc and I are truly honored to be Claire's parents and are amazed by the remarkable young woman that she has become. She is hardworking and has a passion for serving others. No matter how busy she is (even now with her new puppy), she is always ready to offer her time, encouragement, and sound words of advice to help those in need. We cannot wait to see what this next chapter holds, and we are eager for the day when our princess joins us in working full-time at the winery!

During one of her trips with Luc to France, Claire was having some wine with her meal. She then spontaneously exclaimed, "Papa, C'est fou comment mon Français



*Left, Claire graduates Magna cum Laude, USD, spring 2023*

*Above, Claire presents wines from the Morlet Family Vineyards portfolio, 2023*

*Below, The 'Ma Princesse' Chardonnay is enjoyed by our princess!*

s'améliore avec un deuxième verre!" (Papa, It's crazy how my French improves with a second glass of wine!) While we cannot promise that your foreign language skills will improve, we do invite you to raise a glass (or two!) of the 'Ma Princesse' Chardonnay in honor of the remarkable friends and family members in your life. *A Votre Santé!*



## Spring 2024 Release



2021

### 'FORCE TRANQUILLE'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY  
CABERNET FRANC

Located in the world-renowned Oakville appellation, in the heart of the Napa Valley, the To Kalon Creek meanders through our property. The combination of gravelly and clay-loamy Bale soil and gravelly and silt-loamy Clay soil consistently reveals the complexity and subtlety of the Cabernet Franc varietal, in this warm yet temperate climate. This special wine pays homage to Luc's mother, Marie-Thérèse Morlet, who has always displayed an unwavering commitment to details, amazing courage and a genuine spirit of humility. Her dedicated work ethic remains one of the forces behind our family's passion for crafting the best wines possible. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques, it is 'Quiet Strength' or 'Force Tranquille.'

**Jeb Dunnuck 98 points:** *The 2021 'Force Tranquille' is absolutely brilliant, with darker black fruits, olive, iron, and some meaty notes that turn more floral and perfumed with air. It's full-bodied and has perfect tannins and a seamlessness that's something to behold. It will probably merit a triple digit rating in 7-8 years.* — *JebDunnuck.com, Dec. 2023*



2021

### 'PASSIONNÉMENT'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Crafted with the passionate, uncompromised and ongoing pursuit of quality, this judicious blend comes from the finest barrels of our manicured vineyards on the Oakville Bench and on the foothills of Knights Valley and St. Helena. As the French say, "Je t'aime, un peu, beaucoup, passionnément!" (I love you, a little, a lot, passionately!) This special wine is dedicated to my wife, Jodie Morlet. It is 'Passionately' or 'Passionnement.'

**Jeb Dunnuck 99 points:** *The 2021 'Passionnement' is just about pure perfection. This is upfront and as sexy as can be, offering a saturated ruby/purple hue, notes of red and black currants, walnuts, spice box, chocolate, and smoked tobacco, as well as full body, velvety tannins, and a broad, expansive, mouth-filling texture that's to die for. Despite being a massive wine, it has perfect balance and no hard edges. It's approachable today yet will benefit from 4-5 years of bottle age and cruise for 2-3 decades in cold cellars.* — *JebDunnuck.com, Dec. 2023*



2021

### 'CŒUR DE VALLÉE'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Located in the world-renowned Oakville appellation, in the heart of the Napa Valley, the To Kalon Creek meanders through our property. The Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc vines benefit from the gravelly and loamy Bale soil derived from an alluvial fan in this warm yet temperate climate. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques, this wine is dedicated to Dr. Richard Johnson and Dr. Nancy Hampel who have always demonstrated their kindness of heart. It is 'Heart of the Valley' or 'Cœur de Vallée.'

**Jeb Dunnuck 98 points:** *The 2021 'Cœur de Vallée' is a screaming good effort displaying a rich, full-bodied, layered, and powerful style that somehow manages to stay flawlessly balanced and elegant. Jammy currants, dark chocolate, tobacco, black olive, and lead pencil shavings all define this remarkable 2021, which is deep purple-hued and has ripe, polished tannins and flawlessly integrated fruit, oak, tannins, and acidity. It deserves 4-5 years in the cellar and should hit full maturity a decade after the vintage. It will keep for 30+ years.* — *JebDunnuck.com, Dec. 2023*



2022

### 'LA PROPORTION DORÉE'

SONOMA COUNTY  
PROPRIETARY  
WHITE BORDEAUX-  
STYLE BLEND

A harmonious blend of the three classic white Bordeaux varietals, this unique cuvée was inspired from the finest producers of Pessac-Léognan. The Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle come from dry-farmed vineyards in the Golden State's Sonoma County. Classical winemaking techniques such as *élevage sur lies* (aging on the lees) and *bâtonnage* (stirring) contribute to this true *vin de garde*. As in architectural arts, it is 'The Golden Ratio' or 'La Proportion Dorée.'

**Winemaker Notes:** *The 2022 'La Proportion Dorée' displays a very intense, complex and powerful bouquet of honeysuckle, white peach, candied lemon and blackcurrant bud. The vibrant aromatics further showcase crushed stones alongside hints of juniper berry and clove. Rich and concentrated with a great deal of gras, the harmonious mid-palate is full-bodied, elegant and textural, featuring an impressively long finish.* — *Luc Morlet, Feb. 2024*



2022

### 'MA PRINCESSE'

RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY  
CHARDONNAY

Located on the river bench of Sonoma County's Russian River, this vineyard benefits from Goldridge soil containing metamorphic rock. The cuttings come from the Old Wente field selection, renowned for excellent quality and minerality. Its concentration originates from the typically petite size of the berries. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this wine is dedicated to our daughter, Claire Morlet. It is 'My Princess' or 'Ma Princesse.'

**Winemaker Notes:** *The 2022 'Ma Princesse' springs out of the stemware with a very intense and complex bouquet of white flowers, candied citrus fruits, candied William pear and fresh hazelnut, with strong mineral notes and hints of pine needles. Rich and concentrated, this full-bodied Chardonnay boasts a powerful, yet smooth and seamless character, showcasing a beautiful gras and natural acidity leading to a gracefully long finish.* — *Luc Morlet, Feb. 2024*



2022

### 'MA DOUCE'

FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW  
CHARDONNAY

Located on the Sonoma Coast, on the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean, this hillside vineyard is comprised of Goldridge soil and benefits from both the cool maritime breeze (*douce brise*) and the mild and sunny mountain climate. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this wine is dedicated to my wife, Jodie Morlet. It is 'My Sweet' or 'Ma Douce.'

**Winemaker Notes:** *With a stunning and intense bouquet of fresh white flowers, Golden Delicious peel, citrus oils, notes of wet stone and hints of iodine, the multi-layered 2022 'Ma Douce' Chardonnay is rich, concentrated, and lively. Medium-bodied, this complex Chardonnay is very smooth from beginning to end and boasts a highlighted natural acidity, furthermore, revealing its mineral background and a very lingering finish.* — *Luc Morlet, Feb. 2024*



2022

'EN FAMILLE'  
FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW  
PINOT NOIR

For generations, our family has been growing the Pinot Noir grape in France. Each harvest, we celebrate this time-honored commitment while our children stomp a small vat of Pinot Noir from California's Sonoma Coast. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this special wine is dedicated to our grandparents, parents and relatives from both countries. As with any family celebration or casual gathering, this wine is to be appreciated 'En Famille.'

**Winemaker Notes:** *The 2022 'En Famille' bursts with very intense notes of wild Griottes cherries, framboisier raspberry dessert, and notes of earthy patchouli, sandalwood, and fresh leather. This medium-bodied Pinot Noir displays a gorgeous texture with silky tannins and well-integrated acidity, and boasts a long, beautiful, and very complex finish.* — *Luc Morlet, Feb. 2024*



2022

### 'CÔTEAUX NOBLES'

FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW  
PINOT NOIR

Located on the Sonoma Coast, on the eastern slope (Côte) of the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean, this hillside vineyard (Côteau) benefits from the cool maritime breeze and the mild and sunny mountain climate. The noble site's natural conditions are ideal for growing excellent Pinot Noir in the Goldridge soil. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, it is the 'Noble Hillside' or 'Côteaux Nobles.'

**Winemaker Notes:** *The 2022 'Côteaux Nobles' skips out of the stemware with a very intense, fresh, and complex bouquet of raspberry coulis, wild Griottes cherries and kirsch-like elements, alongside hints of sandalwood and anise. Showcasing an amazing texture, this medium-bodied Pinot Noir displays a melting mouthfeel with velvety tannins and a lively natural acidity, finishing long with flavors reminiscent of its bouquet.* — *Luc Morlet, Feb. 2024*

# MORLET

*Family Vineyards*



MANICURED  
VINEYARDS,  
CLASSICAL  
WINEMAKING  
& CREATIVE  
ARTISANSHIP