

2013 Morlet Family Vineyards Chardonnay Ma Princesse

The 2013 Chardonnay Ma Princesse, which comes from the Goldridge soils that run through the Russian River and parts of the Sonoma Coast area, has plenty of white peach, poached pears, brioche, and crushed rock as well as quince. It is stunningly steely, rich, and full-bodied, coming from some of the older vines that Luc Morlet utilizes. The wet stone notes are a clear indication of minerality.

Luc Morlet, whose brother Nicolas Morlet is the principal winemaker at Peter Michael Winery, preceded his brother, but has his own winery just north of St. Helena and the Culinary Institute of America. It sits adjacent to Route 29 in a beautiful old building from the late 1800s. Morlet, who hails from the Champagne region of France, is on a hot streak in terms of the quality of the exquisite wines he's producing. This is an extraordinary lineup of Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Pinot Noir and possibly the finest 100% Cabernet Franc ever made in California, his Force de la Nature. Morlet is hoping to use about 70% or more estate-grown fruit, as he has been busy acquiring property and now has his estate up to 24 acres.

Luc Morlet produces three cuvées of Chardonnay, one from the Sonoma Coast, one from Goldridge soils, and the th...

- Robert M. Parker, Jr. (December,
2015)

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2013 Morlet Family Vineyards Chardonnay Ma Douce

The 2013 Chardonnay Ma Douce comes from the high-elevation ridge top vineyard, two ridges in from the Pacific Ocean, and is bottled without fining or filtration (essentially the formula for all of the wines in the Morlet portfolio). It displays loads of tangerine oil, brioche, honeysuckle, and nectarine. It is full-bodied, beautifully pure, dense and capable of lasting at least 10-15 years.

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2013 Morlet Family Vineyards Chardonnay Coup de Coeur

Lastly, the selection by Morlet of his favorite barrels is a five-barrel lot of 2013 Chardonnay Coup de Coeur. Pure orange marmalade, white peach, pineapple, mangos, subtle toast, great acidity and a liqueur of rocks underlie the wine's structure and intensity. This prodigious Chardonnay should age well for at least 10-15 years.

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**2014 Morlet Family Vineyards
Chardonnay Ma Douce**

As for the 2014 Chardonnays, I'll keep my notes short. Production levels were slightly lower for Ma Douce and Ma Princesse, but both were among the top 2014 Chardonnays I tasted from among the likes of Peter Michael as well as Marcassin and Aubert. The small crops seem to have produced even more intense wines, but also more structured wines. Again, however, the 2013s are performing so well, I'll wait until the 2014s are in bottle, but you can see from my scores this is another great vintage for Luc Morlet.

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2013 Morlet Family Vineyards Pinot Noir Coteaux Nobles

As for the 2013 Pinot Noirs, the 2013 Pinot Noir Coteaux Nobles, which is 100% destemmed and given a 5- to 7-day cold maceration, is a beautifully textured, dark ruby/purple wine with seductive, sweet black cherry and black raspberry fruit, some blacker currants, forest floor and earth. It is full-bodied, rich, and a gorgeous wine to drink over the next 10-15 years.

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2013 Morlet Family Vineyards Pinot Noir en Famille

There are 230 cases of the 2013 Pinot Noir En Famille. This wine displays notes of fresh saddle leather, loads of black cherry liqueur, and with the vineyard's exposition full south, it shows wonderful ripeness and richness, with oodles of kirsch, spice and some background forest floor and earth. It is a full-bodied beauty to drink over the next 10-15 years.

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2013 Morlet Family Vineyards Pinot Noir Joli Coeur

The 2013 Pinot Noir Joli Coeur is what Luc Morlet calls the sweet spot of his Coteaux Nobles Vineyard. The berries tend to size up smaller and the clusters weigh less. This has an extra gear in it, so to speak, and displays plenty of black and red currant fruits, some rose petals and other floral notes, forest floor, a full-bodied mouthfeel, terrific texture, and remarkable richness and purity. This stunner will age well for 10-15 years.

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**2014 Morlet Family Vineyards
Pinot Noir Coteaux Nobles**

The 2014 Pinot Noirs behaved like most Sonoma Coast Pinot Noirs did on my trip. Showing lots of potential but coiled tightly, they are still somewhat monolithic, with lots of minerality, but difficult to coax open. It's hard to believe that the three cuvées of 2014 Pinot Noir will equal the 2012s and 2013s, but lets see what they do over the next 12 months, when I have a chance to taste them again.

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**2013 Morlet Family Vineyards
Syrah Bouquet Garni**

Two of Luc Morlet's under-the-radar wines are his Syrah and his blend of Semillon and Sauvignon. The two vintages of Bouquet Garni, which is the 100% Syrah, really come across like a Guigal single vineyard Côte-Rôtie such as La Landonne. This is high-elevation Syrah from the Bennett Valley. The 2013 Syrah Bouquet Garni displays tremendous notes of bacon fat, black olive tapenade, truffles, earth, pepper, grilled meats and blood. It is a compelling, world-class, killer Syrah that is full-bodied and capable of lasting 10-15+ years. It is very French in style, but then again, the winemaker is French!

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**2014 Morlet Family Vineyards La
Proportion Doree**

A perfect wine is the 2014 La Proportion Dorée, a blend of 65% Semillon, 24% Sauvignon Blanc and 1% Muscadelle. This 650-case cuvée is from 29-year-old, dry farmed vines and was barrel-fermented. The wine is absolutely out of this world. With a light greenish gold color and a killer nose of lanolin, caramelized citrus, honeysuckle, orange marmalade and candle wax, the wine displays great acidity, a magnificent, massive, full-bodied mouthfeel, and seems to come across like a Sonoma County version of a dry Haut Brion blanc. This is singular wine - profound, compelling, whatever! It should drink well for at least 10 years, if you can resist its early charms.

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**2013 Morlet Family Vineyards
Cabernet Sauvignon Mon
Chevalier**

The Bordeaux varietals range from a tiny 180 cases of Morlet's Force de La Nature (100% Cabernet Franc from the Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard) to 650 cases of his Knights Valley Mon Chevalier. The 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Mon Chevalier, a blend of 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc, 3% Merlot and the rest Malbec and Petit Verdot, offers cassis, mocha, loamy soil undertones, plenty of chocolate, blackberry and a full-bodied, lush style. Peter Michael was the first to exploit just how superb Knights Valley Bordeaux varietals can be, but Morlet has certainly proven with this wine what is possible. This is a beauty to drink now and over the next 20+ years.

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**2013 Morlet Family Vineyards
Cabernet Sauvignon Coeur de
Vallee**

From the Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard, the 2013 Coeur de la Vallée shows creamy tannins, beautiful blackberry and cassis fruit, and hints of blueberries, violets, forest floor and licorice. This is a blend of 75% Cabernet Sauvignon and 25% Cabernet Franc, and the black fruits are triumphant in this gorgeous wine. It should drink nicely for 25-30 years.

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**2013 Morlet Family Vineyards
Cabernet Sauvignon
Passionnement**

The 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Passionnement comes from Oakville. This is pure Oakville bench Cabernet, with notes of Christmas fruitcake, unsmoked cigar tobacco, cedar wood and crème de cassis. There is a seamless integration of acidity, alcohol, wood and tannin, and the wine is opulent, majestic in the mouth, and very pure and rich. There are only 280 cases of this magnificent, 100% Cabernet Sauvignon which should drink well for 30+ years.

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**2013 Morlet Family Vineyards
Morlet Estate**

From Luc Morlet's own estate just north of St. Helena, the 2013 Morlet Estate comes across like a first-growth Pauillac. Again 100% Cabernet Sauvignon with creamy blackcurrants and blackberry fruit, some licorice, graphite, and background oak, the wine displays excellent minerality, superb fruit intensity, and a multi-dimensional mouthfeel. It should drink well for at least 25-30 years.

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**2013 Morlet Family Vineyards
Cabernet Franc Force de la Nature**

Luc Morlet's three-digit wine is the 2013 Cabernet Franc Force de la Nature, 100% Cabernet Franc from the incredible Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard. This is an ethereal wine that goes beyond just being majestic. Aged in 100% new Darnajou oak, the wine offers a flowery, blueberry and blackberry-scented nose along with forest floor, some sweet, subtle toast and lead pencil shavings. Remarkably rich, full-bodied, but light on its feet and on the palate, the wine builds incrementally to a majestic, full-throttle, seamless work that is rather remarkable. This is an amazing wine, and Luc Morlet has certainly proven once again his incredible talents and knowledge of great vineyard sites. Drink it over the next 15-20 years.

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