



HYDE DE VILLAINES, CALIFORNIA

2013 REDS, 2014 & 2015 WHITES, EN PRIMEUR

Hyde de Villaine, or 'HDV' for short, is a meeting of two vinous dynasties: the Hydes, represented by Californian viticulturist Larry Hyde and the de Villaines, Pamela and Aubert de Villaine of Burgundy's Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. Aubert's wife Pamela is Larry Hyde's cousin.

These are proudly Californian wines, but they are outward-looking, choosing elegance over muscle. *Vins de soif*, in the best French tradition: wines that invite, coax, *demand* you return for another sniff, another swirl. Wines to make you think, certainly, but first and foremost a celebration of Carneros, of California, and of the remarkable winemaking prowess of their owners.

Corney & Barrow has been exclusive UK agent for Hyde de Villaine since 2010.

CARNEROS

A land of misty mornings and sun-drenched, soft-focus afternoons. Little wonder that Microsoft, an hour and a half to the south, chose the undulating vistas of Carneros as the default Windows screensaver...

Carneros straddles the southern end of Napa and Sonoma counties, immediately above San Pablo Bay. Further north, where the climate is warmer, these two famous Californian valleys diverge, the Mayacamas mountains rising between them. Carneros, however, has a foot in both, its flat lands and open access to the misty Pacific ocean providing its all-important cooling influence.

So you could say Carneros is special. It became an American Viticultural Area (AVA) in 1983, the first AVA to be defined on climatological rather than political lines. It is now one of the most coveted corners of the American west coast, specialising in varieties which thrive in cooler climates, such as Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

HYDE VINEYARDS

The four wines in this release are all from Hyde Vineyards, a near-contiguous series of plots in eastern Carneros. Shallow loamy soils and the cool Carneros climate are key here, the gentle winds ensuring the vines receive just enough water, but not too much. This moderate hydric stress persuades the vines to focus on fruit rather than foliage. The Carneros winds make for prolonged seasons – gentle springs and protracted autumns. The extended growing period ensures full, unhurried maturation.

VITICULTURE

Hyde de Villaine's vines are tended to as naturally as possible. Chemical fertilisers and herbicides are avoided, the soil's resulting biodiversity having bolstered the vines and contributed to a natural harmony. This was crucial during California's five-year drought, which the vintages in this offer are a product of, and which finally broke with spectacular rains in 2017.

In a display of new world pragmatism, several clones of each grape variety are planted in order to maximise complexity. The estate boasts four different selections of Chardonnay and Syrah, three selections of Merlot and one selection of Cabernet Sauvignon.

WINEMAKING

In contrast to the vineyards, the winery lies to the north of downtown Napa, sitting beside the Napa River. Built in 2003, this functional modern structure is more garagey than grandiose. The grapes – and the wines they will become – are king. Sorting takes place in the vineyard, both before and during picking and in the winery, on a state-of-the-art sorting table. The juice is moved primarily by gravity, with pumping only when strictly necessary. Fermentation occurs in a mixture of stainless steel tanks, wooden vats and oak barrels. Vineyard plots are fermented separately and blended following fermentation.

THE WINES OFFERED

Four wines, two white and two red, from three different vintages. Not as confusing as it sounds...

The young Chardonnay, **De la Guerra**, is intended for relatively early drinking and is consequently from the most recent vintage, 2015. The **HDV Chardonnay**, from a more rigorous selection of vines, benefits from longer ageing and a little more oak influence. It is a year older, from the 2014 vintage.

The first red is a Bordeaux blend called **Belle Cousine**, in honour of Pamela de Villaine, Larry Hyde's cousin. The second is a 100% Syrah, **Californio** (*sic* – the name given to early regional settlers). Both reds this year are from the highly acclaimed 2013 vintage.



GUY SEDDON

July 2017

THE 2013 VINTAGE

2013 is the must-have California red wine vintage of recent times. A stunner of a year, in which everything went right.

2013 will be remembered in Napa for many years to come. The season represented the peak of the five year Californian drought, which made for a warm, dry spring and an early budburst. Steady temperatures and optimal weather continued through spring and summer with no significant heat spikes, which enabled even growth and ripening. The crop was small and of exceptional quality, with tremendous concentration, colour and texture. Though significantly higher than usual, the tannins are beautifully rounded, and their fine, polished texture is integrating wonderfully.

HDV BELLE COUSINE 2013

Belle Cousine, named after Larry Hyde's cousin Pamela de Villaine, is a Bordeaux blend comprising 70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon. It is made from 2.4 hectares of vines whose ages range from 13 to 29 years. In 2013, the Merlot was picked from 13th to 16th September and the Cabernet Sauvignon on 27th September. Following fermentation, this spent around five months resting before blending. It was then aged for 21 months in 25% new French oak, followed by further maturation in bottle. It has been neither fined nor filtered. The wine was bottled on 29th July 2015. A volume equivalent to 600 cases of 12 bottles has been produced.

TASTING NOTE

Tomato leaf and graphite on the nose, with a touch of savoury spice detailing the rather luxurious red berries. The palate is beautifully ripe, just-so, with a disarming purity of taut fruit. Fine, firm tannins add rigour and bolster the cedary Cabernet, providing a counterpoint to the fleshy loveliness of the Merlot.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 - 2029+)

18

£265/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

HDV “CALIFORNIO” SYRAH 2013

A *Californio* is not a spelling mistake but an early California settler of Spanish descendance who ventured to the wild west. A nod to the European heritage of Hyde de Villaine seems to have been the inspiration here. Californio is made from a tiny 0.6 hectares of south-southeast facing vines aged 13 to 19 years. The 2013 was harvested on 21st September and 8th October and bottled on 29th July 2015. The different lots were aged separately for around five months before blending, and the wine was aged for 17 months in 15% new French oak, followed by 18 months of bottle maturation. It was not fined or filtered. An equivalent of 320 cases of 12 bottles was produced.

TASTING NOTE

Black cherries and spices on the nose, leading into a robust palate of peppery blackcurrant, which is nicely offset by juicy acidity. The 14.5% alcohol passes all but unnoticed, well balanced by ripe, weighty black cherry fruit of sonorous purity. Hints of animal, *sauvage* character complete the picture and detail the long finish.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 - 2027+)

17.5+

£285/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

THE 2014 VINTAGE

“An unseasonably warm spring, followed by a consistently warm summer, promoted accelerated growth, ideal pollination conditions. A few days of cooler weather in August allowed the grapes to slow ripening and helped preserve mineral components and freshness.”

STÉPHANE VIVIER
Winemaker

After one of the driest winters on record in 2013, February and April saw much-needed rainfall, which quickly saturated the soil. The rain was perfectly timed during bud break, promoting rapid healthy growth in the vineyard. A warm spring and summer made for an early *véraison* (colour change) in late June. A cooler end to the summer retained acidity levels and imbued the wines with a very attractive lightness of touch.

HDV CHARDONNAY 2014

This comes from the older blocks of the Hyde vineyard, from vines of between 23 and 33 years of age. The first vintage was 2000. The grapes were whole-cluster pressed and the resulting juice settled, racked and then fermented in stainless steel vats using natural yeasts, before being matured in 20% new French oak barrels for 12 months. The wine then rested for three months in stainless steel vats, followed by 14 months of bottle maturation – all-important for the balance of the finished wine. Bottling took place on 25th November. The equivalent of 2,290 cases of 12 bottles was produced in 2014.

TASTING NOTE

Assertively weighted on the nose, with a lovely white flower perfume dancing above the firm stone-fruit. Beautifully folded, harmonious acidity, with a density of fruit more reminiscent of the Rhone than Burgundy (although how helpful such comparisons are, I am not sure – this is Carneros through and through, and all the better for that). Deft oaking and a poised, long finish.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE
(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2019 – 2022+)

17.5 to 18

£245/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

THE 2015 VINTAGE

“The wines of 2015 show the concentration of the vintage, with vivaciousness and complexity.”

STÉPHANE VIVIER

Winemaker

The drought cycle that started in 2012 continued in 2015, bringing a warm dry winter and an early start to the vegetative cycle, with bud break in February. In May, unseasonably cool weather gave rise to a problematic fruit set, resulting in low yields. However, smaller berries caused by *millerandage* made for wonderfully concentrated fruit. The summer was hot at Hyde de Villaine. Thanks to a cool start to August, the growing season was extended by a few days, having a beneficial effect on maturity.

DE LA GUERRA CHARDONNAY 2015

The De la Guerra Chardonnay is produced from younger Chardonnay vines. The vines are planted on the eastern side of Carneros, with a south to south-easterly exposure, on shallow loam over clay. This is aged in 10% new French oak barrels and stainless steel vats for up to seven months. The barrel ageing is for micro-oxidation rather than oak flavour, adding breadth to the mid-palate, whilst the stainless steel safeguards De la Guerra's trademark freshness and mineral focus.

TASTING NOTE

A pretty floral nose, with wonderfully ripe, effusive stone-fruit beneath. The palate is shot through with a steely line of acidity, which lifts and details the succulent, fleshy white peach. This wears its heart on its sleeve, but that sleeve is perfectly tailored. An earlier drinker certainly, but do try to squirrel away a few bottles for two or three years.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

17.5

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2018 – 2020+)

£395/CASE OF 12 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

Wines are scored out of 20. Customers seem to like it and it has the benefit of simplicity.

We will often use a range of scores (e.g. 16.5 to 17) to indicate the potential to achieve a higher mark. When a '+' is shown it adds further to that potential. Wines from lesser vintages will, inevitably, show a lower overall score.

Wines are judged, in a very broad sense, against their peers. Why? Well, you cannot easily compare a Ford with an Aston Martin, other than they are both cars and have wheels. It is not that different with wine.

A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes and, as always, speak to our sales team.

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SALES@CORNEYANDBARROW.COM