



EARLY MOUNTAIN

2020 Madison County Chardonnay

At the foot of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, nature is at once graceful and fierce. Early Mountain wines are made here through a combination of ingenuity and true grit. We gently tend to every vine so the wine that emerges from the cellar is a clear descendant of the fruit at harvest – a unique wine that respects its heritage while embracing evolution and adventure. Virginian through and through.

Grape Variety: 98% Chardonnay, 2% Pinot Gris

Winemaker Note: We approach this Chardonnay with focus on freshness, precision and texture. This is a delicate line to walk, as it is easier to embrace a distinct style, such as tank-fermented and fresh, or oaky and textured. The wine was barrel fermented and aged, with primarily older French oak - and a bit of new northern European oak, coopered in Austria. It was bottled in July after ten months of lees aging; a technique we are able to employ for texture and mouthfeel, as we modify our farming approach for favor, acidity and freshness. The result is a wine with the roundness and flavors of aging in barrel, on the lees, but also one that retains freshness and the energy of the vintage.

The 2020 vintage of Madison County Chardonnay displays the unique dynamic of season, clone and site. In 2015 we planted five different clones at Early Mountain, all of which play an important role in this wine. We rely on three of these clones for freshness and acid, while the remaining two clones, along with the Quaker run portion provide aromatic depth and texture. We also blend in a small portion of Chardonnay from two other vineyards we work with, resulting in additional complexity.

Aging: Fermented and aged in barrel, a mix of 500L and 228L, 25% new. Older wood is French and northern European and new wood is northern European.

Wine Description: In spite of the early season growing challenges we saw in 2020, this vintage of Madison County Chardonnay displays the freshness and versatility of Chardonnay. This wine is generous in its fresh and vibrant aromatics, displaying bright citrus, green apple and star fruit, leading to deeper stone fruits of ripe peach and nectarine. The savory character of the wine is highlighted by herbal notes of thyme and bay, and a slight gingerbread quality, influenced by barrel and lees aging. This wine presents light to medium bodied with lively acidity and a gentle pithiness on the finish.

In the Vineyard: *The growing season in Virginia was dynamic to say the least, adding to the chaotic nature of the year as a whole. Despite an early budbreak followed by frost risk in late April and early May, Early Mountain was lucky to avoid the worst of it with only a Petit Manseng block and some lower areas of Chardonnay impacted.*

The first half of the growing season was relatively dry and quite hot in June and July. Late July and early August brought a lot of moisture that was very challenging, but things dried out a bit heading into harvest. We ended up in a dance with the Atlantic, as tropical systems waltzed through every ten days for two months. Once again, we were lucky to be spared the worst of the weather, and we emerged at the end of harvest with a cellar full of high quality 2020 wines. In the spirit of every vintage being different than every other in our state, 2020 was unique in that the first half produced lighter wines with high acid and the second half brought riper, more classic wines.

Vineyard Block: Early Mountain Vineyard, Quaker Run Vineyard, Capstone Vineyard. Wild Meadow

Technical: Bottled: 6 July 2021 Cases produced: 503 Yeast: Ambient

Alcohol: 12.1% pH: 3.47 TA: 5.6g/L RS: 1.02g/L (dry)