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**Chardonnays of the Napa Valley Tasting**

**Notes and Instructions:** This tasting is a comparative tasting of Chardonnays from different parts of the Napa Valley and made in different styles designed to showcase the diversity of wines grown and produced in Napa Valley. Therefore, ideal wines should all be the same vintage, all varietaly labeled as chardonnay, made from grapes sourced from specific sub-AVA or place in the valley (as opposed to a blend of grapes from around the valley) and be an example of a specific style of chardonnay.

**Time:** 60 Minutes (estimated)

**Set up**: Room should be set classroom style with all normal tasting items (dump buckets, spit cups, water, neutral crackers, napkin, etc.). Please set each spot with a tasting mat noting the wines and a tasting sheet (see below). Tasting notes for each wine are ideal.

**Wine** **Order**: The correct order of the wines will vary depending on the wines selected and preference of the instructor. Here are three considerations:

1. Taste lighter bodies (low or no oak and malolactic chardonnays) before fuller bodied chardonnays.
2. Taste lower alcohol wines before higher alcohol wines.

**Optional Addition**: Use Google Earth (the Pro edition is best) to zoom in on each vineyard site as the wines are discussed.

**Topic: The Many Faces of Chardonnay**

Chardonnay is Napa County's second most widely planted grape variety and most planted white grape variety (6,890 acres; 400,000 acres worldwide). Of NVV's 530+ members, 41% produce Chardonnay. And, according to ShipCompliant's annual Direct to Consumer shipping report, Chardonnay accounts for nearly 11% of all DTC shipments made by California wineries. The grape is one of the most widely planted grape varieties in the world, with over 400,000 acres planted worldwide, second only to Airén among white wine grapes and planted in more wine regions than any other grape variety.

Although many people think that all Napa Valley Chardonnays are made in a single style – the oaky, buttery California or Napa Valley style – the Chardonnay grape is often called 'the winemaker's grape' because it allows winemakers to put their own stamp on the wine. Chardonnay is an important component of many sparkling wines around the world.

The Chardonnay grape itself tends to be very neutral, with many of the flavors commonly associated with the grape being derived from such influences as terroir and oak. It is vinified in many different styles, from the lean, crisply mineral wines to wines with oak, and tropical fruit flavors. In cool climates, Chardonnay tends to be medium to light body with noticeable acidity and flavors of green plum, apple and pear. In warmer locations the flavors become more citrus, peach and melon while in very warm locations more fig and tropical fruit notes such as banana and mango come out. Wines that have gone through malolactic fermentation tend to have softer acidity and fruit flavors with buttery mouthfeel and hazelnut notes. In Napa Valley, wine drinkers are likely to find all of the above styles depending on the producers and where in the valley the grapes were grown.

**Moderator**

**Suggested Tasting order: 20XX Chardonnay**

**Session Timing and Flow (suggested)**

Minutes 1 – 10: Overview of the Napa Valley and chardonnay (generally)

* See relevant slides from Napa Valley Rocks and Top Planted Varieties Education

Minutes 10 – 20: Silent tasting of all wines

Minutes 20 – 50: Discussion of wines

Minutes 50 – 60: Wrap up/Q&A

**Potential themes during discussion**

1. Where is the vineyard located? How do you think this location affects the wine's sensory profile?
2. What major winemaking decisions do you sense in the wine? (presence and degree influence of oak and malolactic fermentation?)
3. How would you pair each wine with food?