



WINE News

IT'S JANUARY, and we're ringing in the New Year by looking back at what was good about 2009—deals, deals and more deals—and looking forward to the producers and regions we think will wow us, and you, in 2010. So here's to the end of the aughts and to a delicious beginning of 2010. Cheers!

TOP 10 CHARDONNAYS OF 2009

Domestic



2007 Smith-Madrone Spring Mountain District Chardonnay (\$24.99) A great balance of fruit, minerality and structure. Very little new wood is used, so this wine shows pure fruit and just a hint of spice. 92 points and an Editors' Choice, *Wine Enthusiast*: "Dry, crisp and mineral, this Chard has intensely pure flavors of ripe white peach, pear, green apple and pineapple that have a stony scour of cold steel. It's the opposite of the modern style of oaky fruit bomb Chards, with an elegant integrity that's food-friendly and ageworthy"

2008 Alpen Cellars Trinity County Chardonnay (\$12.99) A great price for this bright, pure Chardonnay from an unusually-located place to grow wine grapes. Always a staff favorite because it consistently overdelivers for the price.

2006 Forlorn Hope "Three Graces" Hyde Vineyard Chardonnay (\$37.99) 90 points *Wine Spectator*: "Zesty and vibrant, with green pineapple, tangerine and nectarine fruit that's full-bodied, clean and balanced, ending with a lemon drop burst of fruit."



2006 Stony Hill Estate Chardonnay (\$36.99) This beauty sees no malolactic fermentation and no new wood. Bright fruit and great balance. This wine is very complex for its age, with more weight on the palate than usual, already integrated fruit and mineral flavors, and a finish that lingers dreamily. This drinks now, but put it away as long as you like.

2007 El Molino Rutherford Chardonnay (\$45.99) 92 points from *Wine Spectator*: "A pure, ripe, fleshy Chardonnay, with rich melon, pear, apple and spice notes. Full-bodied, elegant and balanced, ending with subtle nuances. Drink now through 2013."



2008 Foxglove Central Coast Chardonnay (\$10.99) Winemaker Bob Varner makes Foxglove Chardonnay in a fresh, approachable style—loaded with tropical fruit, the wine is crisp and refreshing. It sees no malolactic fermentation or oak, allowing the wine's mineral streak to shine through. Unbelievably good at this or any price! On of the *Wine Advocate's* 50 Super Domestic Wine Values, they write, "Sensational...a fresh, naked expression of Chardonnay that is top-flight."

2007 Dutton Goldfield "Dutton Ranch" Russian River Valley Chardonnay (\$29.99) 91 points from *Wine Spectator*: "Well-structured, with rich layers of creamy fig, melon and apricot, gaining depth and complexity on the long finish. Drink now through 2011."



2007 Varner "Home Block" Santa Cruz Chardonnay (\$36.99) In 1980, twin brothers Jim and Bob Varner began a labor of love, planting Spring Ridge Vineyards in Portola Valley, in the northern part of the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation. The vineyard is made up of several blocks of vines, each with its own distinctive microclimate and soils, producing impressive wine.



2007 Talley "Estate" Arroyo Grande Chardonnay (\$24.99) Talley's 2007 Estate Chardonnay comes from two of the winery's famed vineyards in the Arroyo Grande Valley—Rincon (84%) and Rosemary's (16%)—that is then 100% barrel fermented in 30% new French oak. Tending toward the citrus and Granny Smith apple side of the Chardonnay spectrum on the nose; there's also a subtle hint of walnut and vanilla. In the mouth, the vibrant minerality zings along, carrying with it tangy pineapple and lemon fruit flavors. Balanced and mouthwatering with the velvety texture of a barrel-fermented wine, this plush drink will go well with seafood or your favorite pasta with fresh pesto.



2007 MacRostie Carneros Chardonnay (\$17.99) A classic Carneros Chardonnay that we can barely keep on the shelves. Ripe and rich, with a balance of fruit and creaminess. This is made using some of the best fruit in Carneros: Sangiacomo, Beckstoffer and Durell, among others. From the *Wine Spectator*: "Ripe, complex and full-bodied, with an earthy, loamy, leesy pineapple edge to the flavors. Ends with a hint of lemon-citrus meringue. Drink now through 2012."

Michael Jordan & Bryan Brick