

The next generation of Chardonnay stars make their mark

BY MARYANN WOROBIEC

TALENT
SHOW



Chardonnay is the ultimate winemaker's wine. The grapes present a blank canvas on which vintners can apply different techniques and explore varying styles, while also expressing their *terroir*. "It seems so simple, but Chardonnay responds so well to any input, any decision," explains winemaker Katie Vogt of Pahlmeyer. • This is an exciting time to survey the California vintners who are redefining Chardonnay in the state.

Photograph by JAMES RANSOM

“The wines are as fresh as they’ve ever been,” says winemaker Matt Courtney of Ferren and Arista. He is speaking about his own wines, but he could well be describing the category as a whole. The pendulum has swung back and forth over time, from an extracted style with heavy oak influence to leaner versions that see little or no oak treatment. Now the wines are settling comfortably in the middle. Power and elegance are no longer mutually exclusive, and many of the best examples show both richness and restraint.

Since our previous report on California Chardonnay (“Power & Finesse,” July 31, 2021), former editor Kim Marcus and I have reviewed more than 450 wines in blind tastings at our Napa office, the majority of them earning scores of 90 points or higher on *Wine Spectator’s* 100-point scale. Many of the best Chardonnays today are made by the legends profiled in our cover story (beginning on page 37), but plenty of other top-rated examples come from talented winemakers who are destined to become the leaders of tomorrow.

The challenge for this next generation is to refine upon the work of their predecessors, who helped to establish the modern ideas of artisan winemaking and boutique wines. The younger crowd also brings fresh eyes. “What I do is a tribute to this idea of a generational shift,” says Kistler winemaker Jason Kesner. “Maybe we were stuck in our ways on certain kinds of idealistic underpinnings.”

Kesner, who jokes that his role is a “yeast herder,” joined Kistler in 2008 and took over as winemaker when founder Steve Kistler retired in 2014. Before that, he worked as vineyard manager at Lee Hudson’s namesake site in Carneros.

Kistler focuses on a single, low-yielding clone for its Chardonnays—a practice, Kesner argues, that allows for greater transparency in the wines. “I think there is such a thing as a truth in the vineyard that can be expressed in the wine from a given vintage,”



Pahlmeyer winemaker Katie Vogt in the winery’s Napa Valley cellars

“Chardonnay responds so well to any input, any decision.”

—KATIE VOGT

he says. This year’s report includes 11 Kistler wines rated 93 points or higher, including seven in the classic range of 95-plus.

Kesner also subscribes to a minimalistic approach in the cellar, a concept that’s proving to be something of a trend among winemakers. “I think our whole process is more about what we don’t do as opposed to what we do,” he explains. “It’s wonderful to have the confidence and freedom for us to figure out how we can get better—and to me, that’s a process of subtraction. How can we do less? How can we get more clarity from the sites and the vintage and get them to speak stronger?”

Courtney also sees a focus on transparency as fundamental to his winemaking. “The whole joy of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in particular is their capacity to translate *terroir* so transparently,”

Rating California Chardonnay Vintages in Major Regions

	Carneros	Napa	Santa Barbara*	Sonoma	
2020	93	92	93	94	A dry year yielded concentrated, balanced wines; most Chardonnay picked before the wildfires
2019	95	92	91	96	Warmer weather than in 2018 produced wines with a deep well of fruit and spice flavors
2018	92	90	93	95	Nearly ideal conditions delivered wines with concentrated fruit flavors and crunchy acidity
2017	94	90	91	93	Ample winter rain followed by a warm growing season yielded complex and powerful wines
2016	90	89	89	90	Solid but variable year; fine quality in Sonoma and Santa Barbara
2015	90	89	90	90	Sonoma strong again in another drought year; elegant and refined in style
2014	92	92	87	92	Drought produced spartan crop; fine quality, with yields the only disappointment

*Santa Barbara County, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Maria Valley and Santa Ynez Valley AVAs

Note: Most California Chardonnays are ready to drink upon release.

A score range indicates preliminary analysis based on barrel samples and/or a limited sampling; many wines of the vintage not yet reviewed. **Vintage ratings:** 95–100, classic; 90–94, outstanding; 85–89, very good; 80–84, good; 75–79, mediocre; 50–74, not recommended



Winemaker Richie Allen takes the wheel at Rombauer Vineyards

he says. “Let’s focus on that. Let’s give them the best chance to do that.” Courtney worked with Helen Turley and John Wetlaufer for eight years before taking over in 2012 as winemaker at Arista (a second-generation family-run winery focused on Russian River wines) and then founding Ferren (a Sonoma Coast specialist) in 2013. Between the two labels, Courtney made nine wines at 90 points or higher this year, including two classic-scorers.

Count Courtney among the California vintners who practice a Zen-like approach to harvest. “I think there’s this tradition of: ‘Harvest is hard.’ It’s just like war and we’re going to battle,” he says. “There’s a lot of work of course, but what we want is for people to feel like they have enough time and space to get to all of the little details. You have to have order, and there needs to be precision. You can’t allow for chaos to happen. It has to be clean, it has to be tidy. There has to be the fewest number of movements.”

Taking over winemaking at a famous brand can come with some level of stress. “I hear that all the time—‘Don’t change the Chardonnay!’” says Vogt, who made outstanding wines for Pahlmeyer in both the 2019 and 2020 vintages. But she points out that every winemaker has their own perspective. “What makes them so

“There’s no secret sauce. It’s relatively simple—just protect the juice.”—RICHIE ALLEN

timeless and special?” she wonders about the wines. “What can I do?” Vogt believes in early blending, a technique she learned from working with Rhône-style wines. “It’s better when it hangs out a bit,” she says. “Just like second-day spaghetti sauce.”

Another winemaker under pressure to maintain the status quo is Richie Allen of the wildly popular Rombauer. “I can’t change the character and style of the wines, but I have to make high quality wines,” he says. “That led us down the path of little-by-little constant improvements.” He added optical sorters in the cellar, improved the farming practices, switched to a different barrel grain and brought efficiency to the overall process. “There’s no secret sauce. It’s relatively simple—just protect the juice.”

MacRostie winemaker Heidi Bridenhagen also excelled this past year, making eight outstanding wines from 2019 and 2020. She says that for MacRostie, opening a tasting room in Healdsburg in 2015—and communicating directly with the winery’s customers—helped to guide its Chardonnay program to focus on more vineyard partnerships.

Before MacRostie, Bridenhagen worked with Jackson Family Wines, Clos du Bois and Sonoma-Cutrer. She is struck by how flexible Chardonnay can be. “Whether it starts with your intentions in the vineyard or the juice coming into the door of the cellar,” she says the work of the winemaker comes through. Her winemaking strategy includes a vigorous tasting schedule and keeping the lots separate. “I want to know they are not just amazing, but are they different?”

Senior editor MaryAnn Worobiec is Wine Spectator’s lead taster on California Chardonnay.



MacRostie winemaker Heidi Bridenhagen at the estate’s Thale’s Vineyard in Sonoma

Recommended California Chardonnays

More than 450 wines were reviewed for this report. A free alphabetical list is available at [WineSpectator.com/ChardonnayAlpha073122](https://www.winespectator.com/ChardonnayAlpha073122).
WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

WINE	SCORE	PRICE	WINE	SCORE	PRICE
KONGSGAARD Chardonnay Napa Valley The Judge 2019 Bold, packing lemon curd, dried pineapple and Fuji apple flavors, with mineral, sea salt, sesame seed, orange blossom, honey and tarragon.	97	\$250	THREE STICKS Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Durell Vineyard 2019 Savory and taut, with dried sage and tarragon accents to the mix of apple and glazed pear flavors, ending with light buttery accents.	94	\$65
FERREN Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Frei Road Vineyard 2019 A stunning core of Key lime pie, Honeycrisp apple and dried mango shows details of salted butterscotch, graham cracker and dried ginger.	96	\$80	WAYFARER Chardonnay Fort Ross-Seaview Wayfarer Vineyard 2020 Impressive, with ripe mango, dried pineapple and tangerine flavors that are intense, focused and juicy. Supple and elegant.	94	\$90
HDV Chardonnay Napa Valley Hyde Vineyard 2019 Offers a pure beam of white nectarine, mango and ripe Bartlett pear on a rich, supple frame, joined by pound cake, nutmeg and hazelnut.	96	\$78	ANTICA NAPA VALLEY Chardonnay Napa Valley Mountain Select 2020 This rich version reveals notes of toasted coconut and buttery brioche, with flavors of sesame seed, lemon curd and ripe Bosc pear.	93	\$35
KISTLER Chardonnay Sonoma Valley Durell Vineyard 2019 Leads with savory notes of crushed shell, dried tarragon and toasted sesame seeds, with a supple core of peach, honeycomb and melon.	96	\$95	BENOVIA Chardonnay Russian River Valley La Pommeraiie 2019 Powerful, with lemongrass aromas leading to Gala apple and citrus flavors. Toasty midpalate, with buttery accents on the spicy finish.	93	\$60
PAUL HOBBS Chardonnay Sonoma Mountain Richard Dinner Vineyard 2020 Succulent, with a polished mix of honeycomb, ginger paste, Meyer lemon, Bartlett pear and apricot, backed by spicy hints on the finish.	95	\$90	BREWER-CLIFTON Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills 3D 2019 Notes of lemon zest flank concentrated apple pastry and white peach flavors in this white, with creamy accents and a minerally finish.	93	\$65
PETER MICHAEL Chardonnay Knights Valley La Carrière 2020 Aromatic and vibrant, revealing orange blossom and wildflower honey notes, with a concentrated core of lemon curd, peach and mango.	95	\$105	CERITAS Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Marena 2019 Shows a powerful mix of Meyer lemon, litsea oil, lemon thyme, dried ginger and ruby grapefruit flavors, with a flinty edge on the finish.	93	\$50
RAMEY Chardonnay Russian River Valley Ritchie Vineyard 2019 Powerful and balanced, with lemon curd, Fuji apple, mandarin orange and ripe Crenshaw melon, plus white tea, herbs and salted butter.	95	\$75	COPAIN Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Tidal Break 2019 Plush, with custard-filled white fruit flavors that show unctuous buttery nuances. Ends with toasty accents on the spicy finish.	93	\$55
SANDHI Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Romance 2020 Boasts Honeycrisp apple, lemon blossom and pear flavors on a powerful frame of acidity, with sesame seed, white tea and flint on the finish.	95	\$95	DUMOL Chardonnay Russian River Valley Chloe 2019 Pure and sleek, with lemon verbena and litsea oil aromatics. Touches of lemon curd and butterscotch lead to notes of sea salt on the finish.	93	\$72
ARISTA Chardonnay Russian River Valley UV-El Diablo Vineyard 2019 Flavors of nutmeg and clove show a hint of molasses in this version, opening to notes of ripe pear, buttery apple cobbler and honeysuckle.	94	\$90	DUNSTAN Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Durell Vineyard 2019 Reveals notes of pear, white flowers and clipped herbs that show precision and depth, ending with white peach and green tea accents.	93	\$65
HARTFORD COURT Chardonnay Russian River Valley Jennifer's 2019 Generous, with pineapple upside-down cake and peach flavors that show a whiff of butterscotch, backed by a mouthwatering finish.	94	\$75	HANZELL Chardonnay Sonoma Valley 2019 Fresh and precise, offering ripe Bartlett pear, lemon zest and Fuji apple flavors, with hints of makrut lime leaf and sea salt.	93	\$78
HUDSON VINEYARDS Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros Seashell 2019 Big, rich and distinctive, offering aromas of dried mint and sage, with flavors to match, plus notes of melon, ripe apple and guava.	94	\$95	MACROSTIE Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2020 Distinctive, with jasmine, orange blossom and fresh lime zest flavors that are fragrant and precise, plus lemon curd and peach at the core.	93	\$38
JOURNEYMAN Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2020 Features peach, Honeycrisp apple, white flowers and ripe Crenshaw melon on an elegant frame, ending with a touch of minerality.	94	\$48	PATZ & HALL Chardonnay Russian River Valley Zio Tony Ranch 2019 Rich, with savory accents to the green apple and pear flavors, backed by lemon meringue notes midpalate and pastry nuances on the finish.	93	\$70
MARCASSIN Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Marcassin Vineyard 2014 Beeswax and caramel notes swirl around a core of poached pear and apple pastry, with hints of jasmine green tea and roasted peach.	94	\$150	ROAR Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2020 Ripe stone fruit and melon flavors find depth and precision on a plump, fleshy frame, with a hint of honey and plenty of spice.	93	\$55
PAHLMAYER Chardonnay Napa Valley 2020 Shows caramel-covered apple, apricot pastry and ripe peach flavors on a lush frame, with toast, nutmeg and honeysuckle on the finish.	94	\$110	STONESTREET Chardonnay Alexander Valley Upper Barn Vineyard 2018 Powerful, with ripe pear and Gala apple flavors that are creamy and broad-textured, showing spiciness and pastry accents on the finish.	93	\$150
RIDGE Chardonnay Santa Cruz Mountains Estate 2020 Bold and intense, with a smooth body, this offers a core of peach, pineapple and toasted spices that show overtones of butterscotch.	94	\$60	EL MOLINO Chardonnay Rutherford 2020 A distinctive version, with peach and apricot flavors, showing notes of marmalade, salted butter, peach blossom and brioche on the finish.	92	\$65
SAXON BROWN Chardonnay Sonoma Coast SBX Reserve 2017 Powerful, with concentrated cooking spice and buttery notes to the pear tart and apple pastry flavors. Very toasty and rich on the finish.	94	\$100	ROMBAUER Chardonnay Carneros Proprietor Selection 2020 Succulent, with butterscotch and salted caramel notes to the peach, melon and citrus flavors at the core. Balanced, with a spicy finish.	92	\$75

California Dreamin'

This group of reds, whites and rosés from the Golden State should satisfy your entertaining needs in the warmer months. From crisp and fruity to savory and spicy, these wines offer flavors and textures to suit every occasion.

DIVUM Chardonnay Monterey Single Vineyard 2019 (91, \$19) Honeysuckle, lemon blossom, lemon meringue, apricot, yellow apple

GIRARD Chardonnay Carneros 2019 (91, \$19) Elegant, supple; mango, peach, lemon meringue

MARGERUM Sauvignon Blanc Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara Sybarite 2020 (91, \$26) Pomelo, citrus zest, makrut lime leaf; powerful, sleek

ALMA DE CATTLEYA Pinot Noir Sonoma County Rosé 2021 (90, \$22) Crisp, floral, pretty; peach, watermelon, spice

INTERCEPT Chardonnay Monterey County Charles Woodson's Intercept 2020 (90, \$20) Lemon zest, tangerine, Fuji apple, tarragon, gray salt; vibrant, focused

LUCY Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Rosé 2021 (90, \$22) Crisp, fruity; floral, raspberry, peach

MORGAN Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands G17 2019 (90, \$25) Cherry, red plum, spice, sassafras; plump, zesty

Code Red

Whether varietals or blends, these Old World reds deliver terrific quality for the price. Savvy readers will recognize Bodegas Borsao and Fattoria di Basciano as producers whose go-to bargains are perennial leaders when it comes to value.

DOMINIO DE TARES Mencía Bierzo Cepas Viejas 2017 (92, \$29) Vibrant, expressive; cherry, blackberry, orange peel, tobacco, white pepper, graphite, stone

BODEGAS BORSAO Syrah Campo de Borja Zarihs 2017 (91, \$11) Baked blackberry, herbed olive, toast, smoky mineral; elegant, fresh

LAURENT FAYOLLE Crozes-Hermitage Hauterives 2020 (91, \$27) Lush, savory; black cherry, plum compote, cast iron

BODEGAS BORSAO Garnacha Campo de Borja Tres Picos 2019 (90, \$19) Rich, firm, modern; blackberry, blueberry, menthol, toasty smoke, spice

FATTORIA DI BASCIANO Chianti Rufina 2019 (90, \$16) Black cherry, blackberry, violet, wild herbs; pure, focused

BODEGAS CARCHELO Jumilla C 2018 (89, \$15) Balanced; dried cherry, sandalwood, olive, smoke



ANTIGAL WINERY & ESTATES Malbec Men-doza Uno 2019 (90, \$15) **BEST VALUE** Fresh, firm; brambly blackberry, violet, thyme, mineral

D'ANGELO Basilicata Brigante Lucano 2019 (89, \$16) Supple, salty; dried black cherry, tarry smoke, Mediterranean scrub, orange peel

VOLVER Monastrell Alicante Tarima 2020 (88, \$12) Blackberry coulis, baked damson plum, grilled herbs, warm brown bread; fresh, spicy

Summer Days

This well-chosen selection of light, refreshing whites from Germany, Spain and Italy are sure to quench your thirst in style.

DR. H. THANISCH MÜLLER-BURGGRAEF Riesling Kabinett Mosel Bernkasteler Badstube 2020 (93, \$24) Charming, exuberant; jasmine, peach, lime, slate

NIK WEIS ST.-URBANS-HOF Riesling Mosel Wiltinger Alte Reben 2020 (92, \$23) Sweet woodruff, lime, green apple, white peach, brown spices; intense, balanced

A PORTELA Treixadura Ribeiro Beade Primacia 2020 (91, \$20) Refined, persistent; peach, white blossoms, lemon curd, green almond, mineral

ALOIS LAGEDER Pinot Grigio Alto Adige Porer 2019 (91, \$28) Asian pear, yellow plum, kumquat, cumin, cardamom, white blossoms; salty, linear

AUGUST KESSELER Riesling Kabinett Rheingau R 2020 (90, \$19) Off-dry, crisp, juicy; lemon, floral, mineral

SALVATORE MOLETTIERI Greco di Tufo 2019 (90, \$25) Ripe, racy; golden apple, pear, floral, licorice, slate, smoke

SANT'ELENA Pinot Grigio Friuli Isonzo Rive Alte 2019 (90, \$24) Steeped raspberry, almond, orange zest, chervil; bright, aromatic

Mucho Malbec

Argentine Malbec is very comfortable on its home turf in the foothills of the Andes, yet several subzones have gained recognition. These GIs (Geographical Indications) guarantee the grapes' origin. La Consulta and Uco Valley are two, while Gualtallary is a subzone of the Tupungato GI.

ALTOCEDRO Malbec La Consulta Old Vine Reserve 2020 (93 \$30) Rich, harmonious; plum, blackberry, spice, mineral

ALTOCEDRO Malbec La Consulta Año Cero 2021 (88, \$17) Cherry, plum, roasted herbs, spice, mineral; savory

ANDELUNA Malbec Uco Valley 1300 2020 (88, \$15) Juicy, floral; plum, berry, five-spice

ZORZAL Malbec Gualtallary Terroir Único 2019 (88, \$15) Plum, blackberry, roasted herbs, chocolate, spice; well-defined

—Bruce Sanderson

SPECTATOR SELECTIONS

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED



96 RÉSONANCE Pinot Noir Yamhill-Carlton Résonance Vineyard 2019 **\$65 OREGON** Impressive and compelling, this

impeccably structured Pinot epitomizes the best of Willamette Valley, combining depth and grace with expressive raspberry, fresh violet and crushed stone accents.

COLLECTIBLE



96 ALAIN VOGÉ Cornas Les Vieilles Vignes 2019 **\$90 FRANCE**

This red is packed with succulent cherry, plum paste and blackberry fruit flavors that show hints of mulled spice, dried anise, singed tobacco and sweet tapenade, with a mouthwatering mineral edge on the lengthy finish.

SMART BUY



92 MACROSTIE Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2020 **\$26 CALIFORNIA**

Peach, apricot and mango notes are pure, intense and extremely juicy on a fleshy, succulent frame, with hints of spice, orange blossom and dried ginger.

BEST VALUE



91 S.A. PRÜM Riesling Mosel Essence 2020 **\$14 GERMANY**

Though dry, this harmonious white has a plump feel and ample fruit to wrap around the acidic spine, with a mix of peach, apricot, lime and slate flavors.

IN THIS ISSUE'S BUYING GUIDE

You'll find **39 classic wines** and more than **350 outstanding wines** from among reviews of nearly **550 new releases**. Tasting notes and scores for those wines, along with **hundreds of additional wines** reviewed since our last issue, can be found at WineSpectator.com using the Wine Ratings search, a members-only service.

About the Buying Guide

This Buying Guide contains ratings of new releases from around the world. Complete tasting notes are provided for new releases scoring 85 or more points (on the *Wine Spectator* 100-point scale, explained below). Hundreds of additional reviews appear each month on our website, www.winespectator.com.

Each review carries the initials of the *Wine Spectator* editor who blind-tasted and scored the wine and wrote the review, based on the regional specializations indicated below.

Bruce Sanderson	<i>Burgundy, Piedmont, Tuscany, Germany, Austria</i>
James Molesworth	<i>California Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir, Bordeaux, Rhône Valley, Port</i>
MaryAnn Worobiec	<i>California Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc, Australia, New Zealand</i>
Alison Napjus	<i>Spain, Italy, Champagne, Alsace, South Africa</i>
Tim Fish	<i>California Zinfandel and Merlot, Oregon, Washington, U.S. sparkling wines</i>
Aaron Romano	<i>Argentina, Chile</i>

How We Do the Tastings

Wine Spectator editors taste more than 11,000 wines each year. Wines are tasted in our offices in New York and Napa, Calif. Tastings are also conducted on location in various European winegrowing regions.

All tastings are conducted in private, under controlled conditions. Wines are always tasted blind, in flights organized by varietal, appellation or region. Bottles are bagged and coded. Tasters are told only the general type of wine (varietal or region) and the vintage. Price is not taken into account. Each tasting begins with a wine previously rated, which is tasted non-blind as a reference point. Other already-rated wines are inserted into the blind tasting to ensure consistency. A typical tasting session consists of 20 to 30 wines, with a maximum of two sessions per day. We retaste many wines to confirm impressions, always in subsequent blind tastings.

Notes and ratings are entered directly into our database prior to the removal of the bags. Additional comments may be added to a note after the identity of the wine is revealed, but the score is never changed.

Featured Wines: Spectator Selections, Labels and Photographs

Each issue, our editors choose wines with special qualities; called Spectator Selections, they are highlighted in the first pages of this Buying Guide, along with their labels. The categories are described below. In addition, selected reviews throughout the Buying Guide include a photograph of a winery principal, presenting these producers in a more personal way. All labels and images are chosen by *Wine Spectator* for editorial purposes only and do not represent any commercial transaction between *Wine Spectator* and the producers whose wines are featured.

Highly Recommended: The issue's most impressive wines. Includes top-scorers and wines that represent optimal purchases based on their combination of score, price and availability.

Collectibles: Wines that will improve most from additional bottle age and that show the greatest potential to gain in value.

Smart Buys: Wines that deliver fine character at affordable prices and that are broadly available.

Best Values: Wines with solid scores, modest prices and wide distribution.

About Prices and Wines Tasted

Prices shown reflect the suggested retail price. When the suggested retail price is not available, we publish the prevailing wholesale price with a standard markup added. Actual retail prices may vary.

Wines are chosen for tasting from among those sent to our offices for review and those purchased at retail. Because we for the most part serve a U.S. audience, we prefer to review wines that are widely available there.

About the 100-Point Scale

Ratings reflect how highly our editors regard each wine relative to other wines in its category and are based on potential quality—how good the wine will be when at its peak. The score summarizes a wine's overall quality; the tasting note describes the wine's style and character.

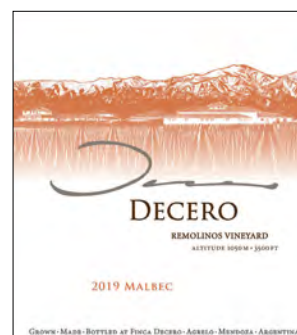
95-100	<i>Classic: a great wine</i>
90-94	<i>Outstanding: a wine of superior character and style</i>
85-89	<i>Very good: a wine with special qualities</i>
80-84	<i>Good: a solid, well-made wine</i>
75-79	<i>Mediocre: a drinkable wine that may have minor flaws</i>
50-74	<i>Not recommended</i>



95 **Domaine Leflaive Chevalier-Montrachet** 2019 **\$1,664** FRANCE A concentrated white, this features vanilla, butter pastry, peach, hazelnut cream and apple flavors. Concise and bracing yet balanced, this should come together nicely in a year or two. Ends with a mineral flourish and a tactile sensation. Best from 2024 through 2030. 95 cases made, 19 cases imported.—B.S.

Smart Buys

Wines that deliver fine character at affordable prices and that are broadly available.



92 **Finca Decero Malbec Agrelo Remolinos Vineyard** 2019 **\$22** ARGENTINA This Malbec shows plenty of verve, with lively acidity and firm tannins offering structure to the floral, loam-laced core of dark plum and cherry flavors, which meld with concentrated mineral and spice notes midpalate. Ends with notes of dark chocolate. Drink now through 2032. 15,000 cases imported.—M.W.



92 **MacRostie Chardonnay Sonoma Coast** 2020 **\$26** CALIFORNIA Peach, apricot and mango notes are pure, intense and extremely juicy on a fleshy, succulent frame, with hints of spice, orange blossom and dried ginger. Drink now. 19,231 cases made.—M.W.



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90 Intercept Chardonnay Monterey County Charles Woodson's Intercept 2020 \$20 This is impressive for its vibrancy and balance, blending fresh lemon zest, tangerine and Fuji apple flavors with a savory thread of fresh tarragon and grey salt on a plump frame, but with plenty of acidity to keep the flavors in focus. Drink now. 5,000 cases made.—M.W.

90 J Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2020 \$33 A note of vanilla custard and a touch of salted Greek yogurt add a rich and creamy side to the apricot and mango curd flavors. Creamy on the finish, with a note of dried ginger. Drink now. 9,800 cases made.—M.W.

90 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay Petaluma Gap Jackson Estate Cloud Landing 2020 \$40 Strikes a terrific balance between crisp and mineral notes, with ripe peach, melon and tangerine flavors that show a touch of orange blossom on the finish. Drink now through 2030. 400 cases made.—M.W.

90 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay Santa Maria Valley Camelot Highlands Estates Collection 2020 \$50 This distinctive white offers a mix of marzipan, spice and fresh hops to mingle with the citrus, apple, pear and tangerine flavors, with a fresh thread of acidity and a smooth texture working in harmony. Drink now. 1,674 cases made.—M.W.

90 Knights Bridge Chardonnay Knights Valley East Block 2020 \$75 Supple and creamy, with an elegant, restrained and spicy expression of pear, apple and melon flavors, backed by lingering details of nutmeg and dried flowers. Drink now. 192 cases made.—M.W.

90 Knights Bridge Chardonnay Knights Valley West Block 2020 \$85 Impressive for its creamy profile, with elegant shadings of nutmeg and toasted brioche to complement the poached pear, yellow apple and peach notes, showing plenty of restraint. Drink now. 578 cases made.—M.W.

90 La Follette Chardonnay Sonoma County Los Primeros 2020 \$25 Tropical notes of pineapple and mango complement the peach, citrus and melon flavors at the core of this white, with hints of green tea and fresh citrus, backed by crisp acidity against a round, seamless body. Drink now. 1,500 cases made.—M.W.

90 LVE Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros Legend Vineyard Exclusive 2019 \$45 Notes of marmalade, lemon curd and orange blossom are rich and bold, showing notes of honey, cream soda and spice on a generous frame, with a fresh thread of acidity keeping the flavors in focus. Drink now. 500 cases made.—M.W.

90 Merryvale Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros 2019 \$40 Honeyed pear and grilled peach flavors show notes of honeysuckle and sea salt, with a core of ripe, fleshy melon and a juicy thread of acidity. Drink now. 3,859 cases made.—M.W.

90 Orin Swift Chardonnay California Mannequin 2019 \$35 Firm and focused, leaning into notes of nutmeg, dried ginger and salted caramel to complement the pear, melon and citrus flavors at the core, with a fresh thread of acidity weaving in and out. Drink now. 2,756 cases made.—M.W.

90 Reeve Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Mirama 2019 \$54 Intense, with buttery accents to the ripe peach, candied lemon and pear flavors, showing hints of butterscotch and flint. There's plenty of juiciness on the succulent, creamy frame, especially on the finish. Drink now. 200 cases made.—M.W.

90 Rochioli Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2020 \$58 Elegant and supple, with hints of toast and crème brûlée to round out the core of peach, melon and apricot flavors, with details of nutmeg and candied orange peel lingering on the finish. Drink now. 1,740 cases made.—M.W.

90 Sandhi Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Rinconada 2020 \$65 Pomelo, lime and pear flavors are juicy and sleek, offering lingering notes of dried ginger, lemon thyme and white tea. Drink now through 2027. 232 cases made.—M.W.

90 Sanford Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills 2019 \$40 Appealing for the intensity to the peach sorbet, lemon-grass and lemon meringue pie flavors, with a touch of salted roasted cashew on the finish. Drink now. 4,997 cases made.—M.W.

90 Sangiacomo Chardonnay Carneros Home Ranch 2019 \$65 Yellow apple, peach and mango flavors showcase floral, honey and dried herbal aromatics on a supple, juicy frame, with fragrant citrus zest on the finish. Drink now. 129 cases made.—M.W.

90 School House Chardonnay Spring Mountain District 2019 \$50 A vibrant, intense core of sleek Meyer lemon and white grapefruit flavors show an appealing earthy, savory note that adds complexity and balance, with fresh grated ginger and sea salt hints on the finish. Drink now. 117 cases made.—M.W.

90 Sojourn Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2020 \$38 Creamy and rich, with creamy salted butter notes up front and a touch of vanilla anglaise to complement the apricot pastry, lemon curd and citrus zest notes that show a juicy thread of acidity. Drink now through 2033. 750 cases made.—M.W.

90 Stags' Leap Winery Chardonnay Napa Valley 2020 \$30 Lime zest, pomelo and white grapefruit flavors are fresh and crisp on a smooth, juicy frame, with a touch of candied ginger and spice on the finish. Drink now. 42,000 cases made.—M.W.

90 Talbott Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Sleepy Hollow Vineyard 2019 \$42 Strikes a terrific balance between toast, spice and cardamom notes, with fresh, plump apricot and peach flavors that are smooth and round on a full body. Drink now. 1,400 cases made.—M.W.

90 Testarossa Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Single Vineyard Series 2020 \$53 Plump and juicy, with a drizzle of honey to the peach tart and ripe pear flavors that show a hint of Fuji apple. Appealing for its generosity and crisp acidity, with plenty of harmony on the finish and a hint of white flowers. Drink now. 312 cases made.—M.W.

89 Belle Glos Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Glasir Holt 2020 \$55 Notes of spice, toasted hazelnut and brioche set the stage for rich, round apple cobbler and apricot flavors at the core of this white. Drink now. 755 cases made.—M.W.

89 Bien Nacido Estate Chardonnay Santa Maria Valley 2019 \$45 Focused and bright, with mineral and white pepper accents to the core of citrus, pear and Honeycrisp apple flavors. Hints of green tea and ginger linger on the finish. Drink now. 536 cases made.—M.W.

89 Buena Vista Chardonnay Carneros 2019 \$35 Lemon blossom, lime sherbet and honeysuckle notes are juicy and bright on a sleek frame, with hints of white pepper. Drink now. 975 cases made.—M.W.

89 Calera Chardonnay Central Coast 2020 \$26 Offers a sleek, mouthwatering mix of lime salt, Fuji apple, pear and lemon zest flavors, with fresh grated ginger and floral notes, backed by crisp minerality on the finish. Drink now. 3,048 cases made.—M.W.

89 Carpe Diem Chardonnay Anderson Valley 2019 \$23 Vibrant and juicy, showing mandarin orange, lemon, green apple and pineapple flavors that are fresh and focused, with a hint of minerality lingering on the finish. Drink now. 2,200 cases made.—M.W.

89 Castello di Amorosa Chardonnay Santa Barbara County Bien Nacido Vineyard 2019 \$39 Pineapple, citrus and green apple flavors are vibrant and intense on a plush frame, with buttery brioche flavors providing a richer undertone. Drink now. 2,050 cases made.—M.W.

89 Cuvaion Chardonnay Napa Valley Los Carneros Small Lot Coeurina 2020 \$60 Lemon meringue, pear cobbler, nutmeg and tangerine flavors are supple and juicy, with a touch of marzipan on the finish. Drink now. 539 cases made.—M.W.

89 De Loach Chardonnay Russian River Valley O.F.S. 2019 \$38 Rich and creamy, with a touch of clove-laced spice to the malt and baked apple flavors, which mingle with peach and apricot notes on a plush frame. Drink now. 1,600 cases made.—M.W.

89 Domaine Anderson Chardonnay Anderson Valley 2019 \$36 Offers an energetic mix of green apple, lime and peach flavors, followed by hints of lemon verbena, sea salt and lemon sherbet on the sleek finish. Drink now. 660 cases made.—M.W.

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92 MacRostie Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Wildcat Mountain 2020 \$48 Intense and distinctive, with hints of tarragon and lemon verbena adding appealing aromatic details to the core of fresh Fuji apple, melon and dried pineapple. A note of white pepper minerality lingers on the finish. Drink now through 2032. 492 cases made.—M.W.

92 Mayacamas Chardonnay Mount Veeder 2020 \$50 Vibrant and intense, with a laser beam of Meyer lemon and yuzu flavors at the core, showcasing lemon thyme, ginger and sea salt minerality on the long finish. Drink now through 2030. 1,800 cases made.—M.W.

92 Michael Brughelli Chardonnay Santa Maria Valley 2018 \$200 Bright and fresh, with expressive lemon blossom, Himalayan pink salt, fresh grated ginger and Honeycrisp apple notes leaping out of the glass, with accents of yuzu, lemon zest and white peach, plus aromatic notes of lemon verbena and orange water lingering on the long, elegant finish. Drink now. 100 cases made.—M.W.

92 Morgan Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Double L Vineyard 2019 \$46 Lemon meringue, yuzu and apricot cobbler flavors are generous, intense and focused in this white, with details of peppery white flowers to the fresh citrus zest and ginger flavors on the long, juicy and expressive finish. Drink now through 2030. 498 cases made.—M.W.

92 Ramey Chardonnay Russian River Valley Rochioli Vineyard 2019 \$75 Vibrant lemon curd, peach and tangerine flavors are ripe and juicy on a fleshy frame, with details of spice and buttery pastry, backed by a lingering hint of sea salt on the finish. Drink now through 2036. 903 cases made.—M.W.

92 Ramey Chardonnay Russian River Valley Woolsey Road Vineyard 2019 \$75 Robust and juicy, with plenty of spicy nutmeg notes and a touch of roasted salted almond to complement the core of lemony citrus and Fuji apple flavors. Drink now through 2036. 624 cases made.—M.W.

92 Relic Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Supermoon 2019 \$75 Lip-smacking, with an intense and juicy core of lemon curd, lemon blossom, beeswax and litsea oil flavors, turning creamy and supple on the finish, where notes of clipped herbs and green tea emerge. Drink now. 117 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sandhi Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills 2020 \$30 Lip-smacking fresh ginger, pomelo and apple flavors are focused, sleek and intense, with a note of sea salt and celery leaf on the finish. Drink now through 2026. 2,000 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sandhi Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Patterson 2020 \$75 Juicy acidity and a note of salted caramel mingle with mango, green apple and tangerine flavors at the core of this succulent white, which is vibrant on the finish. Drink now through 2027. 229 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sandhi Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Sanford & Benedict 2020 \$50 This shows terrific transparency, with pear, mandarin orange, lemon verbena and white pepper details that are focused, balanced and complex, while a whiff of listea oil lingers on the supple finish. Drink now through 2030. 205 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sangiacomo Chardonnay Petaluma Gap Roberts Road Vineyard 2019 \$65 There's an appealing juicy firmness to the citrus, ripe melon and apple flavors on a fleshy and juicy frame, followed by a hint of Himalayan sea salt on the long finish, where a spicy note emerges. Drink now. 129 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sangiacomo Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2019 \$55 Flavors of pineapple, white flowers and candied ginger are fresh and fragrant, with melon, peach and lemon thyme notes on the long, juicy finish. Drink now through 2034. 265 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sangiacomo Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Green Acres Vineyard 2019 \$65 Bold and expressive, offering a core of candied lemon, pear drop and dried pineapple flavors on a rich frame, with toasted brioche and salted roasted cashew notes that show a hint of sunflower seed savoriness. Vibrant acidity keeps the flavors in focus. Drink now. 134 cases made.—M.W.

92 Signorello Chardonnay Napa Valley Hope's Cuvée 2020 \$98 This is supple and creamy, offering an elegant background for lemon curd, tangerine and orange blossom flavors, with a savory thread of sea salt and a hint of vanilla bean that linger on the finish. Drink now through 2028. 411 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sojourn Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Durell Vineyard 2020 \$54 A mouthwatering, crisp frame sets up the foundation for aromatic and precise Honeycrisp apple, lemon sherbet, lemon verbena and lemon thyme on the long finish. Drink now. 350 cases made.—M.W.

92 Sojourn Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Reuling Vineyard 2020 \$69 This offers flavors of spiced baked apple that show hints of nutmeg and clove on a sleek, juicy frame that carries the weight and richness effortlessly, with hints of buttery pastry and lighter, fresher accents of crisp lemon, yuzu and grated ginger. Drink now through 2030. 175 cases made.—M.W.

91 Adelaida Chardonnay Adelaida District HMR Estate Vineyard 2020 \$45 Bursting with peach and apricot flavors, this offers plump, aromatic and generous notes of butterscotch pudding, candied ginger peel, orange sherbet and mango. Drink now. 729 cases made.—M.W.

91 Arista Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2019 \$70 Appealingly rich, with buttery nuances to the apricot, lemon curd and toasted sesame flavors, showing restraint and freshness on the sleek frame. Drink now. 1,700 cases made.—M.W.

91 Barden Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills 2019 \$52 A fresh, mouthwatering core of pineapple, Granny Smith apple and Meyer lemon flavors are sleek and generous, with details of slate and white flowers on the long finish. Drink now. 259 cases made.—M.W.

91 Bouchaine Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros Estate 2019 \$32 Lip-smacking, with juicy and generous lemon curd, tangerine and Key lime pie flavors, backed by fleshy ripe melon and lemon blossom accents that show a touch of brioche and sea salt on the finish. Drink now. 2,800 cases made.—M.W.

91 Bricoleur Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2020 \$38 Distinctive and fragrant, offering pear drop, honeysuckle and vanilla custard flavors that show dried apricot notes, with a hint of white pepper and a fresh thread of lemony acidity. Drink now. 320 cases made.—M.W.

91 Divum Chardonnay Monterey Single Vineyard 2019 \$19 A whiff of honeysuckle and lemon blossom gives way to supple lemon meringue, apricot and yellow apple flavors, ending with notes of salted butter, toasted brioche and peach. Drink now. 2,070 cases made.—M.W.

91 Girard Chardonnay Carneros 2019 \$19 Elegant and supple, with a touch of salted butter adding richness to the flavors of mango puree, peach and lemon meringue at the generous core. Drink now. 3,000 cases made.—M.W.

91 Hanzell Chardonnay Sonoma Valley Sebella Winemaker's Selection 2020 \$58 There's terrific focus to the supple lemon curd, pear and Honeycrisp apple flavors at the core of this fresh white, with notes of salted butter, cardamom, lime sherbet and lemon blossom lingering on the long, expressive finish. Drink now through 2032. 380 cases made.—M.W.

91 JCB Chardonnay Sonoma Coast No. 81 2019 \$52 Elegant, succulent and creamy, with apricot and Meyer lemon flavors that show plenty of nutmeg-laced spice details, backed by a lingering note of toasted sesame seed. Drink now. 250 cases made.—M.W.

91 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay Anderson Valley Jackson Estate Sable Mountain Vineyard 2020 \$45 This strikes a balance between ripe, generous flavors and a thread of savory elements, with lanolin, toasted sesame and sea salt details to the core of lemon curd, mango and peach flavors. A note of nutmeg lingers on the finish. Drink now through 2032. 450 cases made.—M.W.

91 Kosta Browne Chardonnay Russian River Valley One Sixteen 2020 \$85 Pineapple, peach and mango flavors are intense and juicy, showing tangy acidity on a bold frame. Vanilla and pastry flavors linger in the background, with spice notes. Drink now. 2,350 cases made.—M.W.

91 Lucia Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands 2020 \$50 Crisp and appealing with its generous fruit flavors, offering melon, peach and nectarine notes on a sleek and juicy frame, with accents of lemon blossom, dried ginger and apple skin. Drink now. 490 cases made.—M.W.

91 MacRostie Chardonnay Green Valley of Russian River Valley Charles Heintz Vineyard 2019 \$46 Crisp and lip-smacking on a sleek frame, with rich and succulent flavors, including salted butterscotch, Fuji apple, pineapple thyme and nectarine. Drink now. 220 cases made.—M.W.

91 Raymond Chardonnay Napa Valley Reserve Selection 2020 \$20 See Smart Buys, page 95.

91 Stony Hill Chardonnay Spring Mountain District 2018 \$95 There's intensity and purity to the core of green apple, lime and pear flavors in this distinctive version, with a sea salt backbone to the notes of makrut lime leaf, matcha green tea and fresh clipped herbs on the finish. Drink now. 1,100 cases made.—M.W.

91 Wente Chardonnay Arroyo Seco Riva Ranch Vineyard 2020 \$22 See Smart Buys, page 95.

90 Chalone Chardonnay Chalone 2020 \$30 Distinctive, with a drizzle of wildflower honey to the peach cobbler, baked apple and ripe apricot flavors, backed by fresh, vibrant acidity that keeps all the flavors in focus. Drink now. 2,750 cases made.—M.W.

90 Cuvaion Chardonnay Carneros Small Lot Kite Tail 2020 \$60 Hard lemon candy, green apple skin and apricot flavors are intense and juicy, with a touch of sea salt on the savory finish. Drink now. 566 cases made.—M.W.

90 Cuvaion Chardonnay Napa Valley Los Carneros 2020 \$30 Impressive for the bright, fresh core of pineapple, honeysuckle and tangerine flavors, with a touch of dried lemon zest and green cardamom on the finish. Drink now. 3,609 cases made.—M.W.

90 Dehlinger Chardonnay Russian River Valley Garbro Ranch 2020 \$35 Crisp and appealing, offering bright citrus, Fuji apple and mandarin orange notes that have a pretty floral thread of lemon blossom, showing energy and focus on the long finish, where a hint of green tea lingers. Drink now. 300 cases made.—M.W.

90 Donelan Chardonnay Sonoma County Nancie 2019 \$60 Restrained and juicy up front, with plenty of generous Fuji apple and fresh grated ginger flavors that show details of toasted green tea, pink salt and peppery white flowers on a sleek, refreshing frame. Drink now. 700 cases made.—M.W.

90 Etude Chardonnay Carneros Heirloom Grace Benoist Ranch 2019 \$32 Bartlett pear, green apple, lemon-grass and lime sherbet flavors are fresh and pure on a crisp, fresh frame, with aromatic details of peppery white flowers. Drink now. 1,837 cases made.—M.W.



JON PRIEST
Winemaker

93 Paul Hobbs Chardonnay Russian River Valley Edward James Estate 2020 \$90 Strikes a terrific balance between fresh lemon, melon and apple flavors at the core, rich accents of salted butter on fresh brioche and butterscotch on a supple, elegant frame, with a juicy thread of acidity. Drink now through 2031. 350 cases made.—M.W.

93 Paul Hobbs Chardonnay Russian River Valley Ross Station Estate 2020 \$90 A rich white, with honey and spice overtones to the peach, melon and citrus flavors, showing a note of buttery pastry and orange blossom accents. Despite the opulence, a backbone of crispy acidity offers some appealing restraint. Drink now through 2031. 325 cases made.—M.W.

93 Kistler Chardonnay Carneros Hudson Vineyard 2019 \$95 Features fresh and focused Honeycrisp apple, Asian pear and Meyer lemon flavors, with vibrant acidity, notes of lemongrass and fennel seed and a hint of toasted sesame seed on the finish. Drink now through 2027. 900 cases made.—M.W.

93 MacRostie Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2020 \$38 Distinctive and aromatic, with jasmine, orange blossom and fresh lime zest flavors that are fragrant and precise, plus terrific intensity and juiciness on a sleek, mouthwatering frame. Features succulent notes of lemon curd and peach at the core. Drink now through 2032. 350 cases made.—M.W.

93 Peter Michael Chardonnay Knights Valley Belle Côte 2020 \$105 Shows salted butterscotch, peach and tangerine flavors that are polished and focused, with lemon blossom, poached pear and candied ginger notes on a plush, elegant frame. Features a fresh edge of acidity. Drink now through 2032. 2,782 cases made.—M.W.

93 Roar Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2020 \$55 Ripe stone fruit and melon flavors find depth and precision on a fleshy, plump frame, with a hint of drizzled honey and plenty of spice. A floral aromatic note lingers on the finish. Drink now through 2028. 206 cases made.—M.W.

93 Roar Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Soberanes Vineyard 2020 \$55 An intense version, with salted butter and nutmeg overtones to the peach pastry and candied ginger flavors that show a sleek, mineral and flinty thread. Strikes a terrific balance between richness and crispness. Drink now through 2030. 275 cases made.—M.W.

93 Sojourn Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2020 \$45 Bold and harmonious, delivering tropical mango, pineapple and ripe peach flavors that are generous and juicy. Offers terrific purity and freshness, with vibrant acidity and hints of anise and grey salt, which linger on the finish. Drink now through 2029. 450 cases made.—M.W.

92 Antica Napa Valley Chardonnay Napa Valley A26 Vineyard 2020 \$60 Complex and aromatic, with cardamom, nutmeg and white pepper aromas to complement the intensely juicy core of pear, green apple, yuzu and fresh ginger. A note of salted toffee and toasted spices lingers on the finish. Drink now through 2030. 400 cases made.—M.W.

92 Beringer Chardonnay Napa Valley Private Reserve 2020 \$48 Peach, apricot and mango flavors are juicy and fleshy at the core of this white, with honeyed overtones. Salted butter, spice and toasted pastry notes emerge on the finish, as does a touch of dried ginger. Drink now. 8,714 cases made.—M.W.

92 Blue Farm Chardonnay Russian River Valley Laceroni Vineyard 2019 \$75 Fresh and juicy, showing green apple, Meyer lemon and tangerine flavors at the core, with notes of grated ginger and sea salt on a firm, structured frame, followed by a long, crisp and expressive finish. Drink now through 2030. 158 cases made.—M.W.

92 Calera Chardonnay Mount Harlan 2019 \$55 Sleek and juicy, with lemon curd, pear and papaya flavors that are intense and mouthwatering, backed by notes of salted saltine and dried ginger on the finish. Drink now. 280 cases made.—M.W.



JOSH JENSEN
Owner & Winemaker

92 Cuvaison Chardonnay Carneros Méthode Béton 2020 \$50 Distinctive and aromatic, with honeysuckle, lemon blossom and lemongrass notes up front, effortlessly giving way to succulent ripe white peach, apricot and marzipan on a sleek and juicy frame. Seamless, intense and vibrant. Drink now. 279 cases made.—M.W.

92 Dehlinger Chardonnay Russian River Valley Un-Filtered 2020 \$45 Rich up front, with pineapple upside-down cake and baked apple flavors on a creamy, supple frame, accented by fresh citrus zest aromatics. Hints of salted butter linger on the finish. Drink now. 1,150 cases made.—M.W.

92 El Molino Chardonnay Rutherford 2020 \$65 Distinctive, with a tangy edge to the peach and apricot flavors at the core, showing touches of marmalade, salted butter, peach blossom and brioche on the long, expressive finish, with a crisp thread of acidity. Drink now. 832 cases made.—M.W.

92 Gro Chardonnay Mount Veeder Haspel Vineyard 2020 \$42 Pineapple, lemon, pear and yuzu notes are crisp and clean on a sleek frame, with notes of minerality, clipped lemon verbena and fresh grated ginger, with a long, expressive finish. Drink now through 2027. 217 cases made.—M.W.

92 Paul Hobbs Chardonnay Russian River Valley Ellen Lane Estate 2020 \$90 An elegant version, showing a sense of restraint to the candied ginger, lemon blossom and mineral accents that mingle with Meyer lemon, melon and Fuji apple flavors on a sleek frame. Drink now through 2037. 268 cases made.—M.W.

92 Paul Hobbs Chardonnay Russian River Valley George Menini Estate 2020 \$75 Yellow apple, dried pineapple and lemon meringue flavors are fresh and generous, accented with notes of nutmeg and orange sherbet and backed by vibrant acidity. Drink now through 2034. 500 cases made.—M.W.

92 Kosta Browne Chardonnay Russian River Valley Bootlegger's Hill 2019 \$164 Opulent, with buttery toasted marshmallow accents and ripe peach, apricot and mango flavors on a juicy, fleshy frame, showing plenty of intensity and balance on the long finish. Drink now. 275 cases made.—M.W.

92 Lucia Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Soberanes Vineyard 2020 \$65 Succulent, with ripe, bold melon, peach and mango flavors that show a drizzle of honey. Candied ginger, clove and date details plump up the edges, with a crisp, vibrant acidity keeping the flavors fresh and focused. Drink now. 210 cases made.—M.W.

92 MacRostie Chardonnay Russian River Valley Bacigalupi Vineyard 2020 \$54 Succulent, plump and generous, with papaya, peach and citrus flavors that are accented with hints of marmalade, spice, dried citrus zest, honeycomb and orange blossom. Drink now. 184 cases made.—M.W.

92 MacRostie Chardonnay Russian River Valley Kent Ritchie Vineyard 2020 \$54 Complex and dense, showing tahini, lemon sherbet, tangerine and mango notes on a rich frame, with details of spice, mineral and pickled ginger on the mouthwatering finish. Drink now through 2028. 109 cases made.—M.W.

92 MacRostie Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2020 \$26 See Smart Buys, page 94.



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89 Domaine Della Chardonnay Russian River Valley Ritchie Vineyard 2020 \$78 Lemon curd, crème fraîche and candied ginger flavors are rich and bold on a smooth, creamy frame, with a fresh thread of acidity. Drink now. 150 cases made.—M.W.

89 Domaine Della Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2020 \$65 Firm and restrained, with Honeycrisp apple, pear, pineapple and citrus zest notes on a juicy, sleek frame, showing hints of white flowers. Drink now. 150 cases made.—M.W.

89 Ernest & Julio Gallo Chardonnay Russian River Valley Signature Series 2019 \$40 This is impressive for its intensity and focus, with salted buttery edges to the core of ripe pineapple, tangerine, melon and spice notes on a smooth frame, showing a toasty flair. Drink now. 545 cases made.—M.W.

89 Gambal + Work Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Bentrack Vineyard 2018 \$45 Salted Greek yogurt adds an appealing savory note to the apricot, peach and pear flavors, with toasted sesame seed and honey notes on the finish. Drink now. 150 cases made.—M.W.

89 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay Arroyo Seco Jackson Estate Seco Highlands 2020 \$40 Robust, with crisp, juicy pineapple, citrus and melon flavors that show hints of lemon blossom, nutmeg and orange sherbet on a full, broad frame. Drink now. 500 cases made.—M.W.

89 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay Russian River Valley Jackson Estate Fulton Ranch 2020 \$50 Honey, date and dried floral notes add a richness to the core of spicy peach, pear and apple flavors in this white, firming on the finish with robust acidity. Drink now. 518 cases made.—M.W.

89 Knights Bridge Chardonnay Knights Valley KB 2020 \$40 Offers a fresh, juicy core of Fuji apple, Meyer lemon and yuzu juice on a sleek frame, with a hint of lemon blossom. Drink now. 1,334 cases made.—M.W.

89 Kosta Browne Chardonnay Anderson Valley Cerise Vineyard 2019 \$165 There's a firm edge to the citrus pith, almond skin, melon, apple and peach flavors in this intense white, with crisp acidity and notes of peppery white flowers. Drink now. 300 cases made.—M.W.

89 Kunde Family Chardonnay Sonoma Valley 2020 \$18 Creamy, with buttery apricot pastry, pear and apple flavors that seamlessly integrate spice and toast notes on a smooth, juicy frame. Drink now. 1,500 cases made.—M.W.

89 La Crema Chardonnay Arroyo Seco 2019 \$40 Honeyed citrus and stone fruit flavors are generous and plush, with a touch of vanilla bean and sea salt that lingers on the elegant finish. Drink now. 504 cases made.—M.W.

89 Laetitia Chardonnay Arroyo Grande Valley 2020 \$22 Peach and Fuji apple flavors are juicy and appealing, with hints of salted butter, lemongrass, dried ginger and lemon curd, backed by a juicy finish. Drink now. 2,000 cases made.—M.W.

89 Loring Chardonnay Santa Barbara County River Quinn 2020 \$39 Candied lemon notes and ripe peach flavors are bold and expressive on a plump and juicy frame, with a touch of dried pineapple. Ends with a hint of buttery pastry on the finish. Drink now. 500 cases made.—M.W.

89 MacRostie Chardonnay Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch 2019 \$46 This white leans into fresh lemony flavors and a hint of yuzu, with fresh grated ginger, lemon verbena and slate accents on the long, vibrant finish. Drink now. 227 cases made.—M.W.

89 Masut Chardonnay Eagle Peak Estate Vineyard 2020 \$42 A pretty floral note adds complexity, with lemon blossom and honeysuckle mingling with peach, apple and citrus flavors on a creamy frame. Drink now. 500 cases made.—M.W.

89 Morgan Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Metallico Un-Oaked 2020 \$22 Lip-smacking, bright and focused, with Meyer lemon, tangerine, fresh ginger and green apple flavors that sing out on the crisp finish. Drink now. 2,906 cases made.—M.W.

89 Optik Chardonnay Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard 2020 \$40 This is centered around a laser beam of acidity, with Bosc pear, Fuji apple and lemon peel notes, plus candied ginger and spice on the finish. Drink now. 495 cases made.—M.W.

89 Raymond Chardonnay Napa Valley Generations 2019 \$60 Toasty and aromatic up front, with notes of beeswax and litsea oil plus a savory thread of sesame seed to complement the ripe melon, citrus and apple flavors at the core, while hints of toasted coconut linger on the finish. Drink now. 500 cases made.—M.W.

89 Sandhi Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Bentrack 2020 \$85 Intense and distinctive, with flinty mineral accents mingling with salted butter notes up front, leading to a core of intense Meyer lemon, yuzu and Fuji apple flavors on a sleek and juicy frame. Drink now. 66 cases made.—M.W.

89 Sarah's Vineyard Chardonnay Santa Clara Valley Estate 2019 \$36 Crisp and mouthwatering in its intensity, with Meyer lemon, lime zest and yuzu notes that show a touch of Honeycrisp apple skin and accents of ginger, spice and herbs. Drink now. 180 cases made.—M.W.

89 Sequoia Grove Chardonnay Napa Valley 2020 \$36 Crisp grapefruit, pear and orange zest flavors show a thread of minerality and notes of dried herbs on a sleek, juicy frame. Drink now. 2,906 cases made.—M.W.

89 Testarossa Chardonnay California Diana's 2020 \$81 There's intensity to the smoke, toast and spice accents, with plenty of nutmeg to the core of roasted peach, baked apple and pineapple flavors on a taut frame, showing grey salt accents on the finish. Drink now. 434 cases made.—M.W.

89 Truchard Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros 2020 \$35 Fresh and juicy, with ripe nectarine and apricot flavors that come with a hint of buttery pastry and drizzled honey, showing a touch of white tea on the finish. Drink now. 4,026 cases made.—M.W.

89 The Vice Chardonnay Napa Valley Los Carneros Single Vineyard 2020 \$29 There's good intensity to the pear, citrus zest and melon flavors at the supple, juicy core of this white, with hints of white flowers and salted butter lingering on the spicy finish. Drink now. 1,700 cases made.—M.W.

89 Wrath Chardonnay Monterey Ex Unoaked 2020 \$19 Fresh and crisp, with vibrant citrus, apple and pear notes, plus clipped lemon verbena accents and a touch of ginger on the sleek finish. Drink now. 1,008 cases made.—M.W.

88 Bricoleur Chardonnay Russian River Valley Unoaked 2020 \$32 Apple blossom, pear, Fuji apple and lemon zest flavors are accented by spice and ginger on the finish. Drink now. 331 cases made.—M.W.

88 Clos LaChance Chardonnay Monterey County 2020 \$17 Tangy citrus flavors and a touch of sweet cream are supple and smooth, with notes of lemon zest, tangerine and ripe melon. Drink now. 2,000 cases made.—M.W.

88 Decoy Chardonnay California 2020 \$20 Ripe Bartlett pear, quince, melon and Fuji apple flavors are fresh, showing good intensity, with notes of orange blossom, ginger and spice on the finish. Drink now. 155,000 cases made.—M.W.

88 Duckhorn Chardonnay Carneros Huichica Hills Vineyard 2020 \$60 Restrained, with nutmeg and toast accents to the quiet flavors of pear, citrus and apple. A touch of salted butter lingers on the finish, with a fresh thread of acidity. Drink now. 165 cases made.—M.W.

88 Hahn Chardonnay Arroyo Seco Appellation Series 2020 \$20 Tangy tangerine, melon and lemon curd flavors are fresh and round, with crisp acidity and hints of fresh herb and dried ginger on the finish. Drink now. 4,000 cases made.—M.W.

88 Head High Chardonnay Sonoma County 2021 \$22 Fragrant and juicy, offering lemon blossom, pineapple and peach cobbler flavors that show hints of spice on an intense, mouthwatering frame, with good focus on the finish. Drink now. 3,310 cases made.—M.W.

88 Hestan Chardonnay San Francisco Bay Unfiltered 2018 \$50 Jasmine, lemon blossom and lime sherbet flavors are emboldened by threads of spice and toast, with notes of vanilla custard on the finish. Drink now. 639 cases made.—M.W.

88 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay Santa Barbara County Grand Reserve 2020 \$22 Plush and seamless, with ripe peach, apricot and crisp apple notes that show a touch of salted butterscotch on the finish. Drink now. 100,000 cases made.—M.W.

88 Knights Bridge Chardonnay Knights Valley Pont de Chevalier 2020 \$50 Spice and dried floral notes, plus a touch of honeycomb, are set up nicely against ripe melon, peach and yellow apple flavors in this version, with a touch of almond skin lingering on the finish. Drink now. 314 cases made.—M.W.

88 Kosta Browne Chardonnay Russian River Valley El Diablo 2019 \$160 A lean and tight expression of Chardonnay, with flavors of crisp apple skin, toasted salted almond, tarragon and citrus zest, firming up on the finish where a note of dried ginger lingers. Drink now. 250 cases made.—M.W.

88 Lafond Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills SRH 2019 \$25 Peach pastry, vanilla bean and nutmeg-led spices are aromatic and generous on a plush, smooth frame, with a core of stone fruit and melon. Drink now. 2,546 cases made.—M.W.

88 McIntyre Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands 2019 \$28 Crunchy, with Honeycrisp apple, lemon zest and pear flavors on a sleek, juicy frame, showing hints of flowers and minerality. Drink now. 968 cases made.—M.W.

88 Mira Chardonnay Napa Valley Hyde Vineyard 2016 \$95 Buttery and creamy up front, with a hint of salted Greek yogurt to the pear, yellow apple and melon flavors on a plump frame, with spice and toast notes filling in. Drink now. 130 cases made.—M.W.

88 Mueller Chardonnay Russian River Valley LB 2019 \$44 Butterscotch, citrus and stone fruit flavors are juicy, ripe and plump, with touches of tangerine and dried ginger on the finish. Drink now. 192 cases made.—M.W.

88 Nicholson Ranch Chardonnay Sonoma Valley 2019 \$40 Peach, pear and melon flavors mingle with white flower, mineral and spice accents on a sleek frame. Drink now. 966 cases made.—M.W.

88 Sarah's Vineyard Chardonnay Santa Clara Valley Dwarf Oak 2018 \$24 Buttery and rich up front, with ripe, candied notes of stone fruit and citrus, plus hints of salted cashew to complement the roasted peach and baked apple flavors, ending with spice and dried flowers on the finish. Drink now. 937 cases made.—M.W.

88 Sojourn Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2020 \$45 Rich and bold, with vanilla anglaise, toasted brioche and spice accents up front, leading to ripe melon, peach and lemon curd flavors, plus hints of lemon blossom on the finish. Drink now. 125 cases made.—M.W.

88 St. Francis Chardonnay Sonoma County 2020 \$17 Lemon curd, orange sherbet, pear and yellow apple flavors show notes of green tea, spice and ginger on a compact, juicy frame. Drink now. 37,200 cases made.—M.W.