

Best of The Best



California Chardonnay

These tasty 14 are priced to please every pocketbook.

QRW TASTING PANEL

Chardonnay is California's most widely planted premium white wine grape, with 100,000 acres under cultivation. Much of this acreage is used to produce humdrum, bulk-commodity wine. Hence, the lowly reputation California Chardonnay has among so many wine drinkers. But that said, there are numerous Golden State vintners who do

right by Chardonnay. They grow it in cooler zones, where it ripens slowly and achieves good acidity levels. They optimize fruit quality via close-cropping and high-density planting. And they strive during vinification to produce wines that are well structured and elegantly balanced. Here are 14 such California Chardonnays.

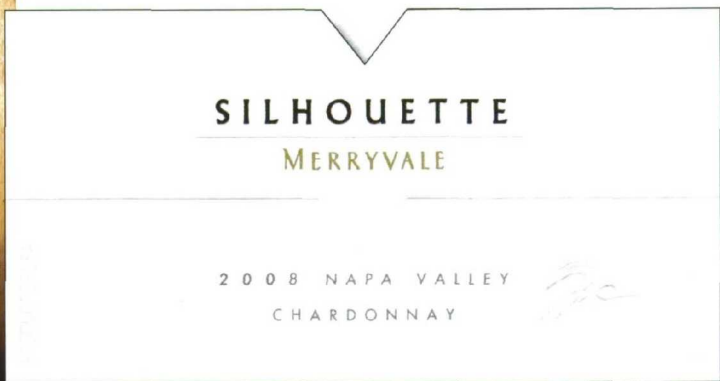
BEST OF SHOW

- **2009 BERINGER PRIVATE RESERVE CHARDONNAY**
(Napa Valley)
- **2008 MERRYVALE SILHOUETTE CHARDONNAY**
(Napa Valley)
- **2008 CHATEAU ST. JEAN CHARDONNAY BELLE TERRE VINEYARD**
(Alexander Valley)
- **2007 ERNEST & JULIO GALLO ESTATE CHARDONNAY**
(Sonoma Coast)
- **2008 KNIGHTS BRIDGE CHARDONNAY BERESINI VINEYARD**
(Napa/Carneros)
- **2008 SONOMA COAST VINEYARDS CHARDONNAY**
(Sonoma Coast)

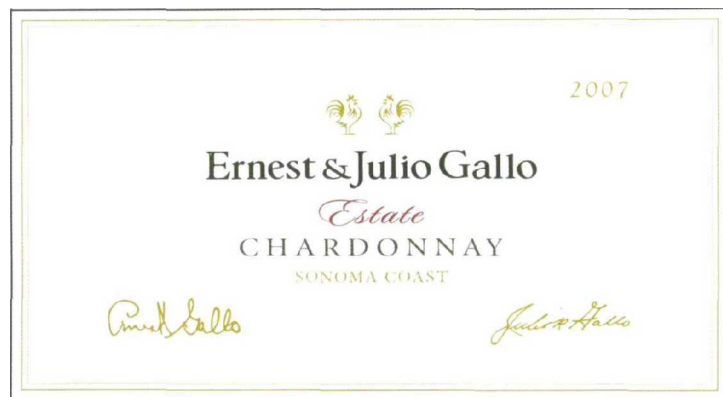
FIVE-STAR CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAY

Outstanding. Wines of such remarkable character and quality as to be in a class by themselves.

- **2009 BERINGER PRIVATE RESERVE CHARDONNAY (Napa Valley), \$37.**
Rich buttery aromas; lush, nougaty, elegantly spun flavors. **BEST OF SHOW**
- **2008 CHATEAU ST. JEAN CHARDONNAY BELLE TERRE VINEYARD (Alexander Valley), \$25.**
Big, rich, mineral and toast flavors buoyed by good underlying acidity.
- **2007 ERNEST & JULIO GALLO ESTATE CHARDONNAY (Sonoma Coast), \$50.**
Elegantly turned almond and lemon curd flavors.
- **2008 KNIGHTS BRIDGE CHARDONNAY BERESINI VINEYARD (Napa/Carneros), \$65.**
Rich, nutty nose; rich, buttery, yet well-focused flavors.
- **2008 MERRYVALE SILHOUETTE CHARDONNAY (Napa Valley), \$65.**
Elegantly cast buttered toast and lemon flavors.
- **2008 SONOMA COAST VINEYARDS CHARDONNAY (Sonoma Coast), \$40.**
Rich, toasty nose; plush, nougaty, well-knit flavors.



Sean Foster, Vice President of Production and Senior Winemaker of Merryvale



FOUR-STAR CALIFORNIA CHARDONNAY

Excellent. Wines of exemplary character and quality — benchmarks of their type.

- **2009 BRIDLEWOOD ESTATE CHARDONNAY (Monterey County), \$14.**
Ripe, succulent, utterly fetching, tropical fruit flavors.
BEST VALUE
- **2008 FERRARI-CARANO RESERVE CHARDONNAY (Napa/Carneros), \$30.**
Subtle, elegantly knit, tropical fruit and toast flavors.
- **2008 FREESTONE CHARDONNAY (Sonoma Coast), \$55.**
Taut, elegant, oatmeal flavors reminiscent of Meursault.
- **2008 J VINEYARDS CHARDONNAY (Russian River Valley), \$28.** Nice, crisp, well-knit, toast and lemon curd flavors.
- **2008 PATZ & HALL CHARDONNAY HUDSON VINEYARD (Carneros), \$55.**
Crisp, clean, well-knit, pear and hazelnut flavors.
- **2009 SCOTT FAMILY ESTATE CHARDONNAY DIJON CLONE (Arroyo Seco), \$25.**
Ripe, vibrant, altogether alluring, tropical fruit flavors.
- **2007 TALBOTT CHARDONNAY SLEEPY HOLLOW VINEYARD (Monterey), \$20.**
Rich, ripe, well-knit, tropical fruit and toasted nut flavors.
- **2009 VALLEY OF THE MOON CHARDONNAY (Sonoma Coast), \$17.** Crisp, clean, deliciously toasty flavors. ☒

