

100

THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE'S 2002

TOP WINES

The Chronicle's wine-tasting panel, a group of wine merchants, restaurant sommeliers and wine buyers, selects wines of quality and value, at all price points, to recommend to Chronicle readers each week in the Food and Wine section of the Wednesday Chronicle.

What follows is our select list of 100 California wines that stand out above the hundreds we have tasted so far this year. The list includes wines rated three stars and higher in The Chronicle's Wine Selections, favorites from seven Chronicle Tasting Panel members and my personal choices. (From this list of 100, we highlighted the Top 10 wines. Those wines are also paired with recipes developed by Chronicle food staff writer Lynne Char Bennett, starting on page 23.) In compiling the list we also consider the wine's availability in the Bay Area, but acknowledge that not all wines recommended below will be available in all stores and restaurants. Many of the recommended wines are made in small quantities, while some are sold mainly to restaurants and others are available in wine retail stores. Consult your local wine merchant and shop around.

Compiled by Gerald D. Boyd

SPARKLING WINE

CARNEROS

Domaine Carneros 1995 Carneros Le Reve, \$55, exotic tropical fruit aromas, toasty back notes; creamy texture, subtle elegant flavors; great length and steady pint-point bubbles.

MENDOCINO COUNTY

Roederer Estate NV Anderson Valley Brut, \$20, crisp citrus and warm bread yeast aroma; creamy texture, bright lemony flavors; smooth silky bubbles.

SONOMA COUNTY

Iron Horse 1998 Green Valley Wedding Cuvee, \$29, abundant micro-bubbles; bright cherry-like aromas; big fruity flavors, bright acidity; long refreshing finish.

WHITE WINES

CARNEROS

Adastra Wines 2000 Carneros Chardonnay, \$28, forward rich apple and pear aromas and flavors, vibrant, juicy flavors, excellent balance, long silky finish.

Beaulieu Vineyard 1999 Carneros Chardonnay, \$18, nicely developed floral and citrus aromatics; creamy texture, full fruit, buttery notes; long fruity finish.

The 1999 vintage will be extremely difficult to find. The current vintage is 2000 (\$18) and is similar in style.

McRosie 2000 Carneros Chardonnay, \$20, ripe tropical fruit with vanilla and toasted oak accents; richly textured flavors, oak and fruit balance; big finish.

NAPA COUNTY

Monticello 2000 Napa Valley Chardonnay, \$26, ripe peach and golden delicious apple aromas and flavors; lush flavors, touch of oak; good length and fruit.

Mason 2001 Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc, \$17, floral nose, honeydew, Meyer lemon, grassy with some mineral; weighty on palate, well-balanced acidity; great length on finish.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Bonaccorsi 2000 Santa Barbara County Chardonnay, \$28, vanilla, pineapple and citrus aroma; broad lush flavors; long layered finish.

SONOMA COUNTY

Aubert Wines 2000 Sonoma Coast Ritchey Vineyard Chardonnay, \$60, fragrant tropical fruit aromas, sweet vanilla oak, perfect concentration and balance; long complex finish.

Baystone 2000 Russian River Valley Chardonnay, \$20, fresh tropical fruit nose; ripe guava and pineapple flavors, bracing acidity; long balanced finish.

Gary Farrell 2000 Russian River Valley Starr Ridge Vineyard Chardonnay, \$34,

Photograph by Lacy Atkins