

White Wines of Burgundy



Chardonnay is one of the most ubiquitous wine grapes in the world. Many wine consumers are aware of offerings from America (particularly Napa, Sonoma and Central Coast), Australia and Chile. These specimens tend to be ripe and full-bodied, even buttery, featuring vanilla notes from oak aging. Some may even ditch the oak aging for a fresher, more fruit centric version.

But what still throws many wine consumers is that White Burgundy, also known euphemistically as Bourgogne Blanc, is the gold standard of the world's most planted grape varietal. Chardonnay is originally from France's Burgundy region, where the best chardonnay wines are powerful and rich, with complex fruit flavors and notes of earth and minerals. More affordable Chardonnays from Burgundy, made from grapes sourced from throughout the region, are crisp and lively, with apple and lemon flavors.

What makes Chardonnay from the Burgundy region so special? It is the combination of climate, land, grape clones and the traditional winemaking techniques that have been perfected over centuries. It is often imitated by winemakers all over the world, but rarely duplicated.

Located about 160 miles south of Paris, the region begins at the town of Dijon and runs southward another 80 miles, almost to the city of Lyon. The climate has a tendency to run on the cooler side, giving grapes a long growing season.

Here are a few Chardonnay wines from the Mother Ship to consider the next time you want an authentic experience.

Not all white Burgundy wines are expensive. The 2010 Goubard Bourgogne Blanc is a value-oriented chardonnay will definitely grab your attention. Scents of brioche and apple blossoms on the bouquet lead to lovely flavors of peach and green apple on the palate. Hints of toast on the medium finish leave a charming impression. \$15

The Maconnais wine region in the south of Burgundy is centered around – and named after – the provincial town of Macon. The area produces a considerable quantity of wine, specializing in white wines, such as the 2012 Pollier Macon-Fuisse. It has a lovely, charming nose featuring scents of creamy lemon, white flowers and white peaches. The apple and nectarine core runs towards the steely side with great acidity and minerals. Just a touch of oak comes through on the medium finish where it adds a whisper of vanilla and brioche. \$18

Chablis is an historic wine-producing town in northern end of Burgundy. It produces light, dry white wines famed for their minerality and crisp acidity. The AOC Chablis wines are produced exclusively from Chardonnay. The 2012 Alain Geoffroy Chablis is produced with just a touch of oak aging, so the chardonnay fruit shines through. It features bright, crisp fresh green apples and white nectarines with just a touch of orange blossom on the finish. Abundant acidity keeps the fruit focused and vibrant. \$25

Ex-pat Blair Pethel was a financial journalist from North Carolina living in London until he decided to turn in his notepad for a crush pad. His 2012 Domaine Dublere Bourgogne Blanc Les Millerands comes from a single vineyard in Meursault and has a bouquet reminiscent of acacia flowers, marzipan, hazelnut and lemon-grass. Green apple, buttered croissant and mineral tones combine with a touch of honey on the elegant palate. It is rich in body with well-defined character and remarkable concentration all the way through the balanced finish. \$25

Another ex-pat, Alex Gambal, is actually from the Washington, DC area. In 1993, at the tender young age of 40, Alex moved to France and – after attending wine school – opened his eponymous domain. The grapes for his 2012 Alex Gambal Bourgogne Chardonnay are manually harvested and whole-cluster pressed and aged on the lees. The bouquet features buttered toast, nectarines and white floral scents. Flavors of apple, peach and nectarine are kept in balance by the wonderful acidity. Hints of almonds and brioche glide in on the lengthy finish. A great wine for the price. \$30