

Excerpted from:

Tasting Highlights

17 Impressive White Wines

Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc from the Cape region of South Africa deliver consistency, diversity and value

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When it comes to white wine, South Africa covers almost all the bases. Blue-chip international varieties such as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are easily had, coming in a range from sleek and minerally to full-bodied and opulent.

Out in the cool Walker Bay district, Bouchard Finlayson has upped its game in recent vintages. Winemaker Peter Finlayson has an unoaked version (Sans Barrique) which provides superfresh, clean apple and melon notes, while his barrel-aged Missionvale and Crocodile's Lair bottlings deliver more toasty oomph. Winemaker Carl Schultz also does a nice job with Chardonnay at the Stellenbosch-based Hartenberg estate.

Sauvignon Blancs provide the foil to Chardonnay's plump profile—there are some tasty, inexpensive values here.

And then there's Chenin, which offers added range for more adventurous consumers who want to branch out from Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The Chenin Blanc debut from De Morgenzon, with former Rudera winemaker Teddy Hall at the helm, is really strong. Chenin is also seeing an increased presence as a blend partner—young Turk Eben Sadie's Palladius bottling leads the way here.

DE MORGENZON Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch 2008 Score: 91 / \$30

A ripe, juicy style, with delicious graham, heather honey and grilled hazelnut notes that slowly give way to persimmon, mango and ginger on the long, rich finish. Showy and delicious. Drink now through 2011. 100 cases imported. —*J.M.*

RAATS FAMILY Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch 2008 Score: 89 / \$23

A ripe, showy style, with creamed peach, Jonagold apple and Cavaillon melon flavors caressed by hints of sweetened butter and macadamia nut. Drink now. 400 cases imported. —*J.M.*

