

## 10 White Values from California

New reviews of crisp, refreshing Sauvignon Blancs that blend quality and value like few other California grapes can

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Well made. Food-friendly. Inexpensive. Consistent. California Sauvignon Blancs are all these things, and this week's selection of 10 examples from our recent tastings demonstrates why this category should be on your shopping list and in your wineglass.



At its best, California Sauvignon Blanc can be wonderfully aromatic and complex, like the examples we see from producers Peter Michael, Chalk Hill and Captûre. These are not cookie-cutter white wines; they are distinctive and memorable, all with that wonderful refreshing acidity that makes them a natural pairing with so many types of food.

There are also some terrific values. Geysler Peak is a perennial favorite, and the Joel Gott is a terrifically focused and vibrant wine. Another value to check out is the bottling from Clif Family, whose founders Gary Erickson and Kit Crawford are also the people behind Clif Bars. If you've ever wanted to taste Clif Bars alongside wine, you can do so at their recently opened Velo Vino tasting room in downtown St. Helena, which is quickly becoming a hotspot for bicycling enthusiasts looking for tips on Napa Valley biking excursions.

The Beringer Blanc points out another side of Sauvignon Blanc, here bottled with Sémillon, Chardonnay and Viognier, with a toasty note to the ripe fruit flavors.

**PETER MICHAEL Sauvignon Blanc Knights Valley L'Après-Midi 2009 Score: 93 / \$48**

Aromatic, complex and ultimately extremely refreshing, this white delivers details of clove, mineral, tangerine zest, lemon curd and mango that weave together a sophisticated profile of flavors. A terrific acidity clarifies the flavors and finishes with a juicy punch. Drink now through 2014. 2,150 cases made. —M.W.

**CAPTÛRE Sauvignon Blanc Sonoma County Les Pionniers 2010 Score: 90 / \$40**

Intense, vibrant and wonderfully focused, with a mouthwatering acidity to compliment the Meyer lemon, passion fruit, Asian pear and sweet pea notes. Builds intensity on the long, juicy finish. Drink now. 663 cases made. —M.W.

**CHALK HILL Sauvignon Blanc Chalk Hill 2009 Score: 90 / \$30**

Pineapple, lemon, green apple and nectarine flavors are mingled with a crunchy acidity, making this refreshing and lively. This is smooth, aromatic and wonderfully balanced, especially on the long finish. Drink now. 7,000 cases made. —*M.W.*

**CAPTÛRE Sauvignon Blanc Lake-Sonoma Counties Tradition 2010 Score: 89 / \$30**

Crisp and vibrant, displaying a terrific blend of peach blossom, lemon meringue, honeysuckle and juicy, mouthwatering lemon flavors. Impressive for its focus and refreshing quality. Drink now. 985 cases made. —*M.W.*

**EMERSON BROWN Sauvignon Blanc Rutherford 2010 Score: 89 / \$25**

Lip-smacking in its tangy refreshment, packing plenty of punch to the mango, nectarine and peach flavors, followed by a terrific citrus wave. This is focused and full of pure fruit, with a long finish. Drink now. 476 cases made. —*M.W.*

**JOEL GOTT Sauvignon Blanc California 2010 Score: 89 / \$12**

Wonderfully focused and fresh, with terrific lime zest, lemongrass, passion fruit, and lemon notes that show laserlike focus. Long, juicy finish. Drink now. 29,294 cases made. —*M.W.*

**BERINGER Blanc Knights Valley 2009 Score: 88 / \$17**

This white delivers smoky, toasty aromatics, and juicy notes of lemon-lime, pear and green apple give this a refreshing quality as well. Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, Chardonnay and Viognier. Drink now. 6,500 cases made. —*M.W.*

**CHALONE Sauvignon Blanc Monterey County 2009 Score: 88 / \$12**

Bright and vivid, featuring a terrific mouthwatering acidity to the lemon, lime and green apple flavors, with a touch of fresh fennel and lemongrass. Drink now. 7,700 cases made. —*M.W.*

**CLIF FAMILY Sauvignon Blanc California The Climber 2009 Score: 86 / \$13**

There's a pretty, aromatic orange zest note to highlight the citrus flavors, bright acidity and light body. Floral touches mark the finish. Drink now. 3,000 cases made. —*M.W.*

**GEYSER PEAK Sauvignon Blanc California 2009 Score: 85 / \$12**

Direct and showing a definite grassy edge, with lemon-lime, grapefruit and green apple flavors that are fresh and nicely juicy. Drink now. 96,000 cases made. —*M.W.*