

YEAR'S BEST 231 U.S. CHARDONNAYS

Wine & Spirits

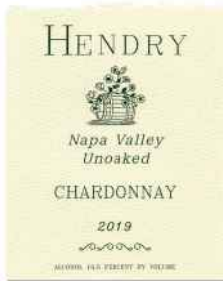
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CHANGE COMES TO
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plus GREAT WINE MENTORS

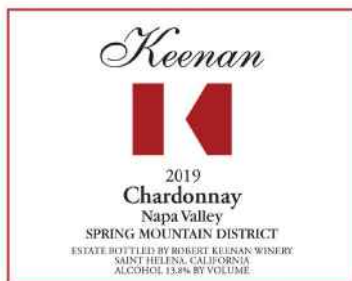
October 2021
WINEANDSPIRITSMAGAZINE.COM
\$7.99 / CANADA \$7.99
DISPLAY UNTIL NOV. 22, 2021



an organically farmed estate that includes 88 acres in Carneros and 163 in American Canyon, the cool, southern districts of the Napa Valley where this chardonnay grows. Now, at 98, Grgich leaves winegrowing to his nephew, Ivo Jeramaz, who produced this complex and compelling wine. Put aside any preconceptions you might have about contemporary Napa Valley chardonnay; consider instead an agriculture that might include native corn (one taster cited the ethereal sweetness of nixtamalized corn) and stone-fruit orchards (a scent of apricots). There's the smokiness of ancho chile and a scent of woodland mushrooms in the wine's dark-toned leanness. Then the layers of flavor last, harmonious and delicious. —J.G.



92 | Hendry \$24
2019 Napa Valley Unoaked Chardonnay (BEST BUY) The Hendry family grows grapes where the hills rise from Carneros at the base of Mt. Veeder, their estate centered northwest of the city of Napa. This wine comes from two blocks of stony soils planted in 1996, the fruit fermented in stainless steel with no malolactic conversion. “It tastes like a bite into a late-fall apple that still has some tart in it,” said Daniel Osman of the Dream Away Lodge in Becket, Mass. Delivering rich, round fruit and freshness, this is a sapid chardonnay with flavor depth. —J.G.

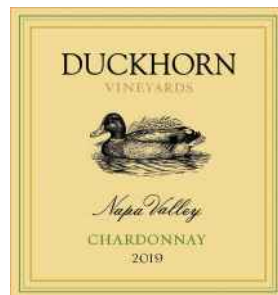


92 | Keenan \$40
2019 Spring Mountain District Napa Valley Chardonnay Grown at an estate vineyard just below Keenan's winery, these vines were planted in 1995, the soil moisture sus-

tained by underground springs. They produce a saturated mountain chardonnay with bold flavors of lemon balm, pale earthiness and some conifer spice. It's a wine structured to age, or to decant for a Moroccan tagine with preserved lemons. —J.G.

92 | Beringer \$39
2019 Oak Knoll District Napa Valley Luminus Chardonnay This chardonnay grows at Beringer's Big Ranch Road Vineyard, where Oak Knoll cool tightens around the fleshiness of the citrus flavors. Ripe orange and citrus pith flavors integrate the oak as the wine layers its flavors and lasts, a little floral, a little smoky and firm. For a veal chop. —J.G.

91 | Beringer \$48
2019 Napa Valley Private Reserve Chardonnay This wine grows at Beringer's Gamble Ranch in Yountville. In 2019, the fruit came in with the summery ripeness of white peaches and Rainier cherries, fleshy and gentle, yet firm. The wine developed its creaminess and some toasted-corn rye notes from its time in French oak barrels; still, it's focused on the clean feel of the fruit. —J.G.



90 | Duckhorn \$36
2019 Napa Valley Chardonnay Give this a splash in a decanter and the wine moves from yeasty notes and hints of flamed orange zest toward an integrated flavor of Marcona almonds and fresh grapes. It's simple and clean with a lovely gentleness of texture. —J.G.

90 | Far Niente \$70
2019 Napa Valley Estate Bottled Chardonnay Ginger, lemon and lemon balm scents sustain this wine's fruit in the presence of rich oak, that fruit developing papaya-like flavors with air. An update on a classic style of Napa Valley chardonnay, broad and balanced. —J.G.

90 | Pine Ridge \$48
2017 Napa Valley Carneros Collines Vineyard Chardonnay Developing a golden color with age, this wine sustains fresh pear

and lemon-balm scents over simple grape-skin flavors. It's soft and elegant, built for lemony roast chicken. —J.G. (1,821 cases)

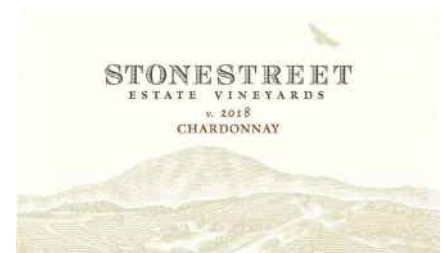


90 | Michael Pozzan \$18
2018 Napa Valley Annabella Chardonnay (BEST BUY) Rich and toasty, this is a luscious chardonnay that feels mouth cleansing in the end. Given a little time, its peach and melon flavors appear fruity rather than sweet, with bright lemon notes, hints of new mown hay and sweet woodruff. A great buy to pour with glazed duck. —J.G.

90 | Stags' Leap Winery \$30
2019 Napa Valley Chardonnay Tight and fresh, this wine has a hint of sweet menthol and mint over its green apple flavors. There's yeasty bitterness and grapefruit acidity in the end, ready to pour with roast sea bass. —J.G.

88 | Matthew Joseph \$20
2019 Napa Valley Chardonnay (BEST BUY) Rich and smoky with buttered peach flavors, this is a lush chardonnay with an appealing bitter edge to counter its richness. —J.G.

SONOMA COUNTY



93 | Stonestreet \$45
2018 Alexander Valley Estate Chardonnay This wine gets its cool tones from the high altitudes at the Jackson family's Alexander Mountain Estate, a 5,500-acre property on the western slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains. Lisa Valtenbergs builds the blend from a range of parcels, at elevations from 400 to 1,800 feet. While the texture is soft and mel-