

Wine Spectator

12 Spicy West Coast Chardonnays

New reviews of whites from California, Oregon and Washington



Courtesy of Gloria Ferrer

Gloria Ferrer is best-known for its sparklers from Carneros, but also makes still wine, like Chardonnay.

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Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.

Originally from France, Chardonnay is now grown in every major winemaking country, and is the most famous white wine on the planet. Because the grape itself is fairly neutral, the resulting wine's style is defined by where and how it's made.

California is well-known for full-bodied, oaky Chardonnays, but has also developed more restrained styles, notably from cooler-climate areas. The grape has reached new qualitative heights up and down the West Coast: Today's selection from Washington, Oregon and California represents the breadth of flavor that Chardonnay has to offer, with both classic and atypical characteristics.

Starting up north in Washington, the [Browne](#) and [Sagelands](#) Chardonnays are both from Columbia Valley, the state's largest AVA. The region is between the same latitudes as those of France's Burgundy region, which is famed for Chardonnay. Both wines are easy-drinking and exhibit spice notes.

The [Argyle](#), [Brick House](#) and [A to Z Wineworks](#) versions hail from Oregon. The first two come from Willamette Valley, in the northwest of the state, and show a little more elegance and complexity. All three display classic Chardonnay characteristics, notably orchard fruit and spice.

Last but not least, we have an array of California Chardonnays, all from northern appellations, like Carneros, Mendocino and Napa Valley. They show an assortment of fruit, from the typical apple and pear to less common gooseberry and mango flavors. Some have California Chardonnay's quintessential buttery note, but the most prominent common thread is spice.

BUENA VISTA Chardonnay Carneros 2016 Score: 89 | \$25

Juicy white, with opulent flavors of mango, peach cobbler and apple pastry that are swathed with plenty of spiciness. Luscious finish. Drink now through 2021. 2,074 cases made.—*K.M.*