

The Best Value White Wine You're Not Drinking Yet

The insider white returns: Chenin Blanc delivers range, value, and weeknight-friendly pricing.

By Ray Isle- September 11, 2025

In sommelier-land, [Chenin Blanc](#) is unquestionably one of the favorites of the moment. But head out into the world of regular U.S. wine drinkers, and this white variety remains one of the least familiar great wine grapes of the world.

Sure, it was popular in the US, once upon a time. In 1988 there were over 36,000 acres of it planted in [California](#). Today there are a little over 4,000, but the winds of change may be blowing. The winemakers who do have a passion for Chenin often sell out their wines swiftly. Admittedly, some of these are made in minuscule quantities — Palisades Canyon in Napa Valley makes one of the best U.S. Chenins I've ever had, but they make under 100 cases of it — but others are not.

And of course Chenin can be found in abundance in its homeland, the Loire Valley in France, as well as in South Africa. No matter where, those qualities that sommeliers love are present: scintillating acidity, a key to its versatility on the table; a range of textures from crisp and light to lush and rich; compelling flavors in a citrus-apple-peach spectrum, sometimes accented with honey notes.

As winemaker John Skupny of Lang & Reed winery says, "It's great to see such a versatile, complex, and delicious grape finally have its day, especially when it comes from so many different regions in the world." I couldn't agree more.

9 Chenin Blancs from the United States

2023 Larkmead Estate Chenin Blanc (\$75)

The production is minuscule here — 107 cases — so if you want to track down this full-bodied, luxurious white, head to Larkmead's website. It's rich with melon and baking spice flavors and a light hint of toasty oak (the 2024 vintage will also be out soon, if it isn't already; unfortunately, there's not much more of it either).



2023 Dry Creek Vineyard Dry Chenin Blanc Clarksburg (\$18)

Sonoma County's Dry Creek Vineyard has been making dry Chenin Blanc for decades now, and it's been a perennial overachiever at its price. It's fresh and succulent, with flavors that recall melon and grapefruit.

2024 Rococo Own-Rooted Chenin Blanc (\$25)

Winemaker Natalie Brown founded Rococo on California's Central Coast specifically to focus on Chenin Blanc. She makes a number of single-vineyard bottlings along with this lively multi-vineyard blend, which tastes like a burst of tangerine and melon flavor, then lingers.

FOOD & WINE



2024 Birichino Old Vines Chenin Blanc Jurassic Park Vineyard (\$28)

The Jurassic Park Vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley was planted in 1978, making these ungrafted vines among the older Chenin plantings in California. This white is fresh and lightly peppery, with a briskly mineral finish.

2024 MinusTide Sterling Ranch Chenin Blanc (\$34)

A California take on the Savennières style, this alluring, golden-hued white is full of ripe orchard fruit and spice notes, ending on a refreshing bite of acidity. It's made in minimal amounts (only 84 cases in this vineyard) so contact the winery directly to find it.

2023 Lang & Reed Mendocino Chenin Blanc (\$35)

Lang & Reed founder John Skupny has been a longtime cheerleader for Loire varieties in California. He started with [Cabernet Franc](#), and later added Chenin to his lineup. Wine lovers should be glad, because this white is lightly toasty, with lime zest and ripe citrus flavors, and a luxurious texture. It would be a stellar wine for lobster.

2024 Aperture Chenin Blanc (\$35)

Aperture, based in Sonoma County, sources the fruit for this high-toned, passionfruit-scented Chenin from vines in the Clarksburg area, down in the Sacramento River delta. It's fresh and tingly, and a joy to drink.

2023 Las Jaras Cézanne Chenin Blanc Old Vines (\$36)

Joel Burt and Eric Wareheim at Las Jaras named this crisp, apricot-accented Chenin after Burt's daughter Cézanne. It's made using grapes from the hillside Norgard Vineyard on the east side of the Ukiah Valley.

2023 Palisades Canyon Chenin Blanc (\$75)

Easily one of the best California Chenins I've had, this honeysuckle-scented, complex white is incredibly alluring. The flavors suggest ripe orchard and citrus fruits, with a savory backdrop of chalky minerality and dried herbs. It comes from a tiny 1.5 acre parcel on a historic Napa Valley site near Calistoga.