

SPRING VEGGIE PLANTING GUIDE

Sunset

YOUR ISLAND BUCKET LIST

BRITISH
COLUMBIA'S
**LOST
COAST**

MAUI'S
DREAMIEST
DINNER
PARTY

DESIGN TIPS
FROM A
**TINY
CABIN**



SORTING OUT SAUVIGNON

Is this our next go-to white? A little sleuthing reveals a sweet spot for every palate and pocketbook.

By Sara Schneider

THE WINE IN my glass costs \$150 a bottle. A version from another producer goes for \$400. Another, \$1,250. Cult Cabernets? No—Sauvignon Blancs. What I used to think of as an easy-sipping variety has been gaining on Chardonnay as our white of choice, but what's up with these wild prices?

Even the wine's character is all over the map these days. The \$150 Lail Vineyards 2015 "Georgia" I'm studying now, for instance, is complex, layered with textures and flavors. "What you're calling confusing is my favorite thing about this variety!" says producer Robin Lail, great-grandniece of Gustave Niebaum, founder of Napa's historic Inglenook estate. "There's no proper way to make it." She outlines numerous factors that make a correlation between style and price clear—starting with the dirt. The Napa Valley land that grows legendary Cabernet is no cheaper if you were to plant it with Sauvignon Blanc. And leaf-by-leaf farming isn't less expensive just because the grape is white.

Winemaking choices continue the connection: Ferment in stainless steel tanks (the inexpensive option, with fresh, drink-me-now results)? Or in pricy French oak barrels? The latter spikes the price but can add layers of flavor and creamy, mouth-filling textures.

These are broad strokes, of course. But in general, slide up the price scale and you'll get a more complex wine—to a point. The \$1,250 bottle? That's scarcity and reputation at work. Expect a mighty long wait to get on that allocation list.

Chalk Hill Estate 2016

(Chalk Hill; \$33)
Stoniness and a hint of anise create a stir under crisp citrus, grapefruit blossoms, vanilla, and a lovely texture.

Robert Mondavi Winery 2014 Reserve Fumé Blanc

(To Kalon Vineyard, Napa Valley; \$52)
Haunting florals, vanilla, and oak spice give way to intense lemon and fig, gorgeous textures, and a long, rocky finish.

Ehlers Estate 2016

(St. Helena, Napa Valley; \$32)
Racy lemon-lime and grapefruit flavors anchor this dry, mouthwatering wine decorated with delicate floral notes.

Lail Vineyards 2016 "Blueprint"

(Napa Valley; \$40)
A trickster, fermented in partially new French oak, then popped into stainless to age. Pretty citrus with a touch of stone fruit and minerality is vibrant and regal.



Gamble Family Vineyards 2014 "Heart Block"
(Yountville, Napa Valley; \$90)

A touch of toasty oak can't cloak beautiful, honeyed layers of bright citrus edged with savory herbs.

Cade 2016

(Napa Valley; \$32)
Crisp and steely but complex at the same time, with honeyed stone fruit, Meyer lemon, and tropical notes balanced by resinous herbs and limestone on the finish.

Pepper Bridge Winery 2016

(Walla Walla Valley; \$32)
Neutral oak and concrete treatment give this one a soft touch, delivering ripe peach, apricot, and pineapple flavors set off by bright acidity.

Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 2016 "Aveta"

(Napa Valley; \$26)
Exotic aromas of lemongrass, fresh herbs, and white blossoms are followed by bright but creamy clementine, pink grapefruit, and puckery lemon zest. 



Photograph by THOMAS J. STORY