

# Robb Report

FOOD & DRINK / WINE

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## 13 Outstanding New Sauvignon Blancs That You'll Want to Sip All Spring

The crisp and refreshing white pairs perfectly with the season.

By SARA L. SCHNEIDER 

It's time to stop calling Sauvignon Blanc "the other white." Surging in popularity recently, according to both growers selling the fruit and wineries marketing their bottles, the wine has clearly taken a chunk out of the go-to-white position that Chardonnay once exclusively enjoyed. In fact, even Chardonnay powerhouses Rombauer Vineyards and La Crema are hedging their bets with Sauvignon now too: Rombauer recently purchased a vineyard in Sonoma where they plan to devote a large acreage to the variety and La Crema is ramping up production on SB (cool-kid lingo in the industry), which they only just introduced under the brand a couple of years ago.

Pundits tend to chalk up Sauvignon Blanc's growing popularity to its refreshing levels of acidity and its, well, simplicity—being all about bright citrus, plus (depending on where its grown) sunny stone fruits or tropicals like kiwi, guava and passionfruit ... Just fruit, in other words. The first part of the assumption I'll grant: Sauvignon Blanc is vibrant and mouth-watering (and incredibly food-friendly because of that). The second? I'd argue that confining this versatile white to the fruit bin is to do it as much of a disservice as stereotyping Chardonnay as a butter and oak bomb does to that variety. (Lovers of the world's great Chards know better.)

Tasting the newest Sauvignon Blancs, from California and Washington in particular, has more than confirmed that good West Coast versions are anything but simplistic. Layers of complexity—nuances of fruit, yes, but also florals, herbs and minerality, and mouth-filling weight and texture—create compelling wines. Wines that demand as much thought as great Chardonnay, even while they refresh and demand another sip, in a way Chardonnay does not. Sure, there are those (often given mostly stainless-steel treatment) whose job is primarily to refresh and delight (no shame in that). But add to that the fact that many producers are throwing as many techniques at Sauvignon from prized vineyard sources as they are toward reds from those sites—oak fermentation and/or aging, alternative vessels like concrete eggs or small stainless-steel barrels and aging on the lees (often stirring) to build texture, weight and mouthfeel.

The bottles here reflect a wide range of treatment—and price, which tends to reflect the preciousness of site and winemaking (well, and pedigree of maker and vintner too, to be honest). But the quality across the range makes the argument I started with: Just don't call these "the other whites."

## **Blueprint 2020 Sauvignon Blanc by Lail Vineyards Napa Valley**

From Robin Lail, under the auspices of winemakers Philippe Melka and Maayan Koschitzky, comes a vibrant, richly textured Sauvignon. (It's worth noting that in 2020, because of the fires, Lail did not make its flagship Georgia Sauvignon Blanc from its miniscule estate vineyard in Yountville, so a bit of oak-aged wine that normally would have gone into that top bottling—at \$160—made its way into this one.) Fresh citrus swirls on the nose with white nectarine, green melon, spring blossoms and wet river stones. An intense and beautiful mouthful of fruit follows—apricot joining grapefruit—with creaminess giving way to savory minerality at the end. Ten percent of the proceeds from Blueprint sales go to organizations fighting climate change (Robin Lail is the US Representative to the Porto Protocol, a global initiative that asks companies to lead on climate action and share their best practices).



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