

NAPA VALLEY'S SUPER SAUVIGNONS SOAR EVEN HIGHER

THE TOP WINES TO BUY NOW

By Karen MacNeil
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Is there anyone left who doubts that—in sheer quality—Napa Valley's top whites are Sauvignon Blancs?

Maybe it sounds a little severe to say, but over the past five years, while Napa's Chardonnays have largely stood in place, the valley's Sauvignon Blancs have soared. These aren't just *good* Sauvignon Blancs; these are ravishingly complex white wines that have a kinship with the greatest white Bordeaux.

Napa's "Super Sauvignons" would be right at home in a blind tasting with, say, Domaine de Chevalier and Château Haut-Brion Blanc—two of the most treasured white wines in the world.

Here's what these Super Sauvignons are *not*: they are not simple. They taste nothing like New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs, for example, which are generally straightforward and unfussy.

No, these Napa Sauvignons are multi-layered and rich without being heavy or ponderous. They're full of beautiful botanical flavors and minerality that somersaults around with dizzying vitality.

Not surprisingly, the grapes are grown and the wines are made in ways not typical of an average Sauvignon Blanc.

- Most are made from grapes grown in top vineyards—vineyards that could easily be devoted to expensive Cabernet Sauvignon
- Most are made from more than one clone of Sauvignon Blanc
- Most are fermented and/or aged in multiple vessels—concrete eggs, stainless steel drums, used oak, and new oak casks and barrels
- Most are made in an artisanal manner, in very small quantities, and are expensive

After a series of blind tastings, here are my top picks for the wines you should consider buying now.

[REALM “Fidelio” Sauvignon Blanc 2022 \(Napa Valley, CA\) \\$123](#)

Absolutely delicious and vividly energetic. Limey, botanical snappiness, plus surges of peach, guava, pink grapefruit, and white pepper. Layered and dynamic. 95 points KM

[KENZO ESTATE “Asatsuyu” Sauvignon Blanc 2022 \(Napa Valley, CA\) \\$90](#)

Very saline and pure tasting with a precision and freshness that is remarkable. Like an exotic lime tonic. Bursting with energy on the palate, and very elegant. 96 points KM

[BRILLIANT MISTAKE WINES Sauvignon Blanc 2022 \(Napa Valley, CA\) \\$78](#)

Tangy and saline within a rich tapestry of vanilla and lime. Very round textural core of softness. Begging for a creamy French triple crème cheese. 95 points KM

[ANIMO “Heritage” Sauvignon Blanc 2020 \(Napa Valley, CA\) \\$69](#)

Tremendously refreshing. One rolling wave of snappiness. Packed with flavor and yet remains aerially light on the palate. Lots of bursting minerality, and very long. 95 points KM

[TURNBULL “Josephine” Sauvignon Blanc 2022 \(Yountville, Napa Valley, CA\) \\$50](#)

The tangiest in the tasting. Loads of vibrant lime, ginger, starfruit, kiwi, and snap peas. The vitality and energy of this wine is off-the-charts. Finishes with a terrific white peppery bite. 94 points KM

[ACCENDO Sauvignon Blanc 2022 \(Napa Valley, CA\) \\$80](#)

Accendo exudes finesse. The complex flavors (white peach, lime, starfruit, minerals) create a beautiful tapestry, and the creamy supple texture is enthralling. This is an exotic, fresh, and very distinctive Sauvignon with great precision. 96 points KM

[ADAMVS Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2019 \(Howell Mountain, Napa Valley, CA\) \\$85](#)

Very rich and waxy with swaths of vanilla bean, toasted nuts, and cream. Round and mouthfilling to begin, with a spicy green peppercorn and mineral finish. Sophisticated and full of personality. 94 points KM

[RUDD “Mt. Veeder” Sauvignon Blanc 2021 \(Mt. Veeder, Napa Valley, CA\) \\$140](#)

Rich, round, and mouthfilling, with lots of gravitas. Layered flavors of honeycomb, candle wax, peach, toasted nuts, and white tea. Full-bodied, but with finesse. Long and satisfying. 93 points KM

[ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY “To Kalon Vineyard” Reserve Fumé Blanc 2020 \(Oakville, Napa Valley, CA\) \\$95](#)

ToKalon is one of Napa’s most famous vineyards, and the Sauvignon Blanc (called Fumé Blanc by Mondavi) has its own unique personality—very dry and bracing, it’s like a gin & tonic with a botanical, herbal lift. 92 points KM

[GAMBLE FAMILY VINEYARDS “Gamble Vineyard” Sauvignon Blanc 2022 \(Yountville, Napa Valley, CA\) \\$45](#)

This was our Wine to Know on August 4, 2023. At \$45, it was one of two “steals” in the tasting. Delicious notes of candle wax, chamomile, starfruit, minerals, and lime zest. Lifted, complex, and rich. 95 points KM

[ARKENSTONE Sauvignon Blanc 2020 \(Howell Mountain, Napa Valley, CA\) \\$125](#)

Rich and very satisfying, with juicy nectarine and vanilla notes and a piquant freshness evocative of lemon curd. You could easily drink this all night! 94 points KM

[SPOTTSWOODE Sauvignon Blanc 2022 \(58% Napa County; 42% Sonoma County, CA\) \\$45](#)

The other “steal” in this group, Spottswode’s Sauvignon is a well-loved classic, with long waves of “good greens”—spearmint, moss, limes, kiwis, and snap peas, plus a vivid oyster-shell minerality that makes the wine super refreshing. 93 pts KM

[LAIL “Georgia” Sauvignon Blanc 2021 \(Napa Valley, CA\) \\$175](#)

Lail’s “Georgia” might cause you to hock the family jewels, but the wine is dynamic and loaded with personality. Tropical, peppery, salty, nutty, and honied all at once, it’s a turbo charged experience and very delicious. 94 points KM