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## The Un-Chardonnay: Limited Edition, Cutting Edge Gems

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**SHOW SAUVIGNON BLANC THE LOVE**—plant it right, crop it right, pick it right, put it in the hands of a master—and you can aspire to the kind of symphonic, tour de force white wines they bottle at Bordeaux paragons like Haut-Brion and Smith-Haut-Lafitte.



In California, where the blander, more malleable Chardonnay has been coddled for decades, there has never been—and may never be—a broad audience for high-end wines that harness, layer and balance the savage elements of Sauvignon's wild nature: the green herbs and sharp citrus zest, the suggestion of minerals and exotic melons.

Here are six very-limited-production, cutting-edge gems that showcase what could be: the compelling heights top California Sauvignon Blancs can reach without ceding a nuance of their Sauvignon-ness. Remember the last Chardonnay you had that was this riveting, this just hold-up-the-glass-and-stare-at-the-thing fascinating? Didn't think so.

**Bedrock 2012 Cuvee Karatas** (\$40) Velvet-robed, with succulent sip-and-savor notes of apricot and honeysuckle, from hands-on Sonoma artisan Morgan Twain-Peterson; a blend of Sauvignon and grapes from possibly the oldest-vine (1886) Semillon vineyard in America. It is also (get on the mailing list) a stone bargain.

**Araujo 2012 Eisele Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc** (\$58) This California benchmark Sauvignon Blanc just got even rarer as new owner Francois Pinault's team decided to hold the 2013 vintage back an extra year. The 2012, made under the ancien régime at this storied property, is gorgeous, with wafting, opulent aromas of melon and white peach and a laser-focused intensity of flavor.

**Peter Michael L'Apres Midi** (\$60) An "afternoon changer" at 15.6% alcohol, with Peter Michael's patented ability to somehow bottle elegant, massively built wines with a deft balance and sense of lift and raciness.

**Arietta 2001 On the White Keys, Artists' Reserve** (\$80) Ex-Screaming Eagle winemaker Andy Erickson crafts this stylish, vibrant Napa wine with nuanced suggestions of honey, lemon curd and white peach. A firmly structured white worth cellaring.

**Vineyard 29 2011 Estate Blanc** (\$135) Whereas the Melka (below) is mercurial, this wine—which star consultant Philippe Melka also made—is ultrarefined with a closely knit, Bordeaux-like polished intensity. Both are flat-out dazzling.

**Melka 2011 Sauvignon Blanc La Mekerra Vineyard** (\$145) Transplanted French wine guru Philippe Melka makes sensational Sauvignon Blanc for Lail, Dana and Vineyard 29 (above), but his own version is All-Planet: luscious, subtle, intense and almost playful as it continually evolves in the glass.

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