

Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

THIS week's edition of the *Wine Spectator Insider* features outstanding wines from California, Bordeaux, Champagne and South Africa. Starting things off, James Laube reviews 17 exciting new California Chardonnays. Most of them (including a classic-rated 2007, which you'll find among the Hot Wines, on page 4) come from Sonoma, one of the Golden State's top regions for the white grape. And from Bordeaux, James Suckling covers the latest releases from the 2006 vintage on the Right Bank, including Châteaux Lafleur and Pavie.

Bruce Sanderson's recent reviews of vintage Champagne are featured here as well. A late-disgorged 1975 brut tops the list, earning 97 points. Finally, James Molesworth's latest tasting notes on the wines of South Africa are included this week, highlighting seven outstanding reds and whites from the Cape.

California

AU BON CLIMAT

Chardonnay Santa Barbara County Los Alamos Vineyard Historic Vineyards Collection 2007

93 points | \$25 | 325 cases made | White

A shade more aromatic and complex than the Santa Barbara County bottling, this has a similar complex, subtle mix of ripe apple, pear and melon, but also a nice dimension from the light smoky, toasty oak, followed by a great finish. Drink now through 2013.—J.L.

PEIRSON MEYER

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Charles Heintz Vineyard 2007

93 points | \$55 | 300 cases made | White

Ripe, with opulent, creamy pear, fig, spice and honeydew melon flavors that gain complexity and body, ending with a long, complex finish. Drink now through 2011.—J.L.

CHALONE

Chardonnay Chalone 2007

92 points | \$25 | 16,801 cases made | White

Exhibits a complex mix of subtle pear, mineral, pleasant earthy notes and floral scents. Tight and full-bodied, ending with a long, persistent finish. Drink now through 2012.—J.L.

FREEMAN

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Ryo-fu 2006

92 points | \$44 | 418 cases made | White

Ripe, intense, rich and layered, offering tiers of vibrant honeydew melon, green apple and pear, with spice and light toasty oak lingering in the background. Drink now through 2012.—J.L.

ANABA

Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2007

91 points | \$32 | 938 cases made | White

An elegant style, with ripe, creamy floral honeysuckle, pear and honeydew melon flavors that glide across the palate, followed by a long, full finish. Drink now through 2011.—J.L.

ARMIDA

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Keefer Ranch 2007

91 points | \$28 | 232 cases made | White

Combines ripe, rich pear and fig flavors with crisp acidity and elegant balance, ending with a long, clean, focused finish. Drink now through 2011.—J.L.