

CHARDONNAY

is medium-bodied and firm in balance with plenty of room to stay the course over the next few years.

   \$13.00

OAKVILLE RANCH VINEYARDS 1992 Napa Valley Vista Vineyard. Rich oaky, grainy, butterscotch tones override scents of varietal fruit in the fairly heavy aromas and, again, in the flavors and aftertaste, toast and nutty qualities dominate over fruit impressions. Somewhat hard on the palate and certainly very flavorful, the wine simply lacks the core of fruit and sense of vitality to bring the whole presentation into agreeable balance. There is a slight edge of bitterness in the short finish.

   \$18.00

SILVERADO VINEYARDS 1992 Napa Valley (2% Sauvignon Blanc). Edging toward the crisp side of the Chardonnay spectrum, this wine offers citrusy impressions from nose to finish. Lemon blossom highlights appear in the clean, ripe apple and creamy oak aromas, and apple, citrus and oak seem just as pleasantly intertwined in the flavors. This clean, direct and flavorful wine has the balance to benefit from a year or two of cellaring but will be very tasty now with a piece of broiled swordfish adorned with dill and a slice of lemon.

   \$14.50

SIMI WINERY 1991 Sonoma/Mendocino/Napa Coming, as it does, in a time where the pursuit of Chardonnay has veered in the direction of lees and oak, this bright, balanced, fruit-focused bottling brings a bit of easy relief. Not that a bit of oak doesn't make an appearance here, but it serves to accent clean aromas and flavors of juicy green-apples rather than pushing the wine beyond its fruity limits. Direct, slightly supple and with a good sense of body, this one will be welcome with dishes like grilled snapper.

   \$14.00

SIMI WINERY Reserve 1989 Sonoma County At first encounter, this sizable Chardonnay impresses with its broad oak, butter and leesy richness, but a second look reveals it as threadbare in basic fruit and not so big as its oaky frame suggests. As developed as it wants to be, it is an ambitious, if not wholly successful, attempt to find richness and depth from an off-vintage.

   \$32.00

STAG'S LEAP WINE CLRS 1992 Napa Valley Direct, appealing toasty and appley scents stand out in the nose. Very youthful and firm at this moment, this well-structured wine offers clean appley flavors somewhat enriched by a creamy overlay of oak. While a bit unrefined at the finish, the wine will benefit from one to three years of cellaring in order to allow the flavor components to integrate better. It will serve well with shellfish at this point and,

over time, it will gain a great many fans for its directness and structure.

   \$18.00

STEELE 1992 Mendocino Dennison Vineyard. Sweet oak and pear-like fruit are offered in the aromas of this medium-bodied, well-balanced wine. Light, leesy, roasted grain notes are noticeable in the nose and become more prominent in the flavors in the absence of forceful fruit.

   \$22.00

STEELE 1992 Mendocino Lolonis Vineyard. Slightly earthy, dank wet wood tones intrude on the toasty-leesy aromas. Fruit is not a strong component in the aromas yet the wine has a nice viscous, sweet butter feel on the palate and a sense of ripe, appley fruit. It is a well-balanced, somewhat rich offering with a touch of mustiness evident in the finish.

   \$26.00

STEELE 1992 Carneros Sangiacomo Vineyard. Pungently leesy-cheesy to the point of obscuring the Sangiacomo fruit, this one relies more on winemaking technique than on varietal character. Oily, viscous and fairly rich in the mouth, the wine has some appealing components, but the pungent qualities muddle its attractiveness and severely limit its use with food.

   \$22.00

STERLING VINEYARD 1990 Carneros Winery Lake Vineyard. Napa Valley. Maturing aromas of toasty oak, butterscotch and smoke show little concern with fruit, and, while ripe, the wine's very oaky flavors are missing that key element of fruit. Medium-full-bodied and a touch heavy in feel, this big, but tiring wine lumbers through to a rough, drying, slightly hot finish and argues for both an extra chill and relatively hasty drinking.

   \$18.00

TRUCHARD VINEYARDS 1992 Carneros Napa Valley. Ripe apple and tropical fruit scents are the core of the wine's appealing fruity impressions while sweet oak and light roasted grain tones add notes of richness in the background. The creamy, supple entry is followed by a round and glyceriny texture on the palate. A succulent wine focused on its fruitiness from nose to finish, it should be readily enjoyable for service as an aperitif on a warm evening or with a luncheon buffet.

   \$16.00

VICHON WINERY 1992 Napa Valley Moderately rich and forward aromas carry ripe apple and sweet oak tones with just a touch of a floral fragrance. At entry the wine offers appealing firmness and weight leading into low-keyed appley fruit and oak flavors. While a touch narrow at the finish, this direct and well-made wine will serve comfortably with foods such as baked chicken.

   \$14.00

