




CHARDONNAY

 **PATZ & HALL** 1994 Napa Valley
Creamy oak and a subtle bit of lees serve as attractive accents to neatly centered apple fruit in the clean, moderately rich aromas. In the mouth, the wine is medium-full-bodied and somewhat rounded in feel, and its flavors steer a slightly leaner course than expected with the taste of green melons more prominent than that of apples. Presently just a little pinched at the finish, the wine should wake up with further age and suggests that its best face will show with a couple of years in bottle.

   \$28.00

 **KENT RASMUSSEN WINERY** 1994 Napa Valley
Pleasant top notes of toast, butter and lees are sympathetic partners to bright, young, slightly citrusy fruit in the nicely defined aromas. Similarly suggestive of citric fruits and green apples on the palate, the wine is fit with a generous measure of rich oak and is slightly rounded in texture. Seemingly a bit too soft for long-term keeping, it flattens a bit at the finish and argues for drinking in the coming year.

   \$21.00

 **MARTIN RAY WINERY** Mariage 1994 California
Choosing ripe and direct fruit as its central message and then dressing up that fruit in creamy oak, this straightforward, generously flavored wine may give up a little in complexity relative to its high-priced peers but has no apologies to make for its out-and-out drinkability. Try pairing it with teriyaki chicken or salmon hot off the grill.

   \$30.00

ST CLEMENT VINEYARDS 1994 Carneros
Abbotts Vineyard, Napa Valley. The deep and forward mix of oak and ripe apple fruit aromas leads to great expectations that are unfulfilled in the mouth. An initial impression of juicy fruit fades too soon, and a crisp, slender, somewhat underfilled wine is revealed on the palate. While still quite drinkable, it is a less-than-satisfying offering given its promising beginnings.

   \$18.00

SONOMA-CUTRER 1994 Sonoma Coast
Russian River Ranches. Lightly creamy in scent and suggesting both pears and apples, this clean, but rather low-keyed offering is smaller and somewhat more rigid than expected in the mouth. Its stiffer aspects will almost certainly be remedied by a year of age, but its fruity limits seem fixed in time.

   \$22.00


STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS 1994 Napa Valley
If forthright lees overshadow a wispy bit of citric fruit in the nose, it is bright, mildly lemony themes that define the flavors of this energetic middleweight. Clean and cleans-

ing, it is also a bit stiff and angular, and its stony finish comes up short in terms of essential fruit. Use this one with lighter entrees that will make best use of its lean but lively style.


   \$22.00

STEELE 1994 California
Bothersome scents of ash and old cheese undermine the limited appeals of skimpy fruit in this big, but somehow hollow offering, and its essentially empty flavors conclude with a soft, almost cloying finish that is every bit as scarce in fruit as all that has gone before.


   \$20.00

 **TRUCHARD VINEYARDS** 1994 Carneros
Napa Valley. Well-focused, concentrated young Chardonnay aromas are replete with deeply fruity apple scents overlaid with plentiful oak as well as nut and roasted grain notes. Rounded and beautifully balanced with a palate pleasing mix of bright fruit flavor enriched by the toasty components displayed in its engaging aromas, this is simply first-class wine. From its solid core of deep, long-finishing fruit to its vital and harmonious composition, this wine invites early drinking yet has all the pieces in place to improve in the cellar for several years to come.

GOOD VALUE    \$19.00

 **VON STRASSER** 1994 Napa Valley
Enticing and omnipresent oak makes this a wine of immediate appeal, and despite a certain lack of underlying succulence, the formula seems to work. Moderately full on the palate with a subtle touch of oiliness in texture, the wine holds its oaky themes well into a lingering, nutmeg-like finish. A solid, if never lively Chardonnay, it will do nicely as a foil to lightly smoked poultry.

   \$30.00

 **VOSS VINEYARDS** 1994 Napa Valley
Here is a good example of why we are so high on the 1994 vintage. This energetic youngster is just brimming with direct, near juicy fruit yet also carries a background note of oaky richness in its nose and shows the toasty edge of barrel-influenced complexity as an interesting adjunct to its fruit-first flavors. Long and well-balanced in aftertaste, this one will serve nicely with broiled fish and lightly sauced chicken dishes over the next few years.

GOOD VALUE    \$15.00

WILDHURST VINEYARDS 1994 California
(22% Semillon). Here you have a wine in which its Semillon addition has contributed little of obvious good. In most mixes of these varietals (an Australian invention), one expects to find lightness, brightness and fruitiness. And since these are among the best traits of Chardonnay of the 1994 vintage, it is doubly disappointing that this wine has turned out clean, a little stiff and altogether too simple in its mild fruit. Its lower price brings it into the range of usefulness, but, even on this front, one can find better wines for the money.

   \$11.00