

woody flavors; hard, woody finish; lingering aftertaste. Below-average quality. The oak appears to dominate the fruit. *14.2% alcohol; 608 cases; 100% BF; 100% ML; released January 1999.* (Group Score: 13.9, 0/0/0; My Score: 14.5 [65/100], twelfth place)

True Ranking: [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8] [9, 10, 11] [12]

1997 CHARDONNAY

More New Releases

1. **1997 Pezzi King**, Sonoma County (\$20) – Medium-light golden yellow color; attractive, rich, intense, toasty, appley, ripe tropical fruit aroma with note of vanilla; medium-full to full body; tart, tight, woody, tropical fruit flavors; well balanced; lingering aftertaste. Above-average to superior quality. The oak is well balanced and integrated with the fruit and this wine should continue to develop with another year of bottle aging. Very highly recommended. *13.5% alcohol; 3,600 cases; 60% barrel fermented (BF); 40% malolactic fermentation (ML); released October 1998.* (Group Score: 16.0 of 20 points, 6 of 16 first-place votes/3 seconds/1 third; My Score: 17 [91 of 100 points], second place)

2. **1997 Truchard**, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$25) – Medium-light golden yellow; attractive, spicy, toasty, tropical fruit aroma with notes of creamy oak and hazelnut; medium-full to full body; moderately rich, creamy, spicy, somewhat lush, ripe tropical fruit, green apple, and vanilla flavors; well balanced; lingering aftertaste. Above-average to superior quality. Very enjoyable to drink now. Very highly recommended. *14.1% alcohol; 1,729 cases; 100% BF; 30% ML; released November 1998.* (Group Score: 16.0, 4/4/1; My Score: 17 [90/100], third place)

3. **1997 Beringer**, "Private Reserve," (\$35) – Medium-light golden yellow; attractive, forward, very toasty, intense, citrus and pineapple aroma with notes of nutmeg and hazelnut; full body; big, forward, rich, slightly viscous, layered, lemony, toasty, ripe Chardonnay fruit flavors; lingering aftertaste. Above-average to superior quality. Very highly recommended, though somewhat controversial at this tasting. I found this stylistic wine to be very appealing though some tasters marked it down for hints of sulfur and too much oak. *13.3% alcohol; 20,000 cases; 100% BF; 100% ML; released January 1999.* (Group Score: 15.7, 1/2/3; My Score: 17 [92/100], first place)

4. **1997 Benziger**, "Yamakawa Vineyards," Carneros (\$25) Medium-light golden yellow; pleasant, initially subdued, floral, earthy, toasty, spiced apple aroma; medium-full to full body; slightly lush, forward, earthy, ripe fruit, green apple flavors with overtones of vanilla; slightly tart on the finish; lingering aftertaste. Above-average quality. Highly recommended. *13.9% alcohol; 339 cases; 100% BF; 100% ML; released January 1999.* (Group Score: 15.7, 2/1/3; My Score: 16.5 [85/100], seventh place)

5. **1997 St. Supéry**, Napa Valley (\$13.50) – Medium-light golden yellow; pleasant, floral, toasty, spicy, lemony, tropical fruit aroma; medium to medium-full body; somewhat tart, appley, lemony, tropical fruit flavors; slightly lingering aftertaste. Above-average quality. Stylistic with hints of a riesling-like character in the aroma. Highly recommended. *13.5% alcohol; 21,751 cases; 100% BF; 47% ML; released December 1998.* (Group Score: 15.5, 1/4/3; My Score: 16.5 [85/100], ninth place)

6. **1997 Guenoc**, "Estate Reserve, Genevieve Magoon Vineyard," Guenoc Valley (\$25) – Medium-light golden yellow; attractive, toasty, buttery, green apple, ripe pear, and tropical fruit aroma with a hint of hazelnut and overtones of vanilla; medium-full to full body; slightly lush, appley, citrusy, toasty, ripe pear flavors; slightly tart and woody on the finish; lingering aftertaste. Above-average quality. Highly recommended. *13.9% alcohol; 2,282 cases; 100% BF; 70% ML; released October 1998.* (Group Score: 15.5, 1/0/3; My Score: 16.5 [89/100], fourth place)

7. **1997 De Loach Vineyards**, "O.F.S.," Russian River Valley (\$30) – Medium-light golden yellow; attractive, spicy, ripe tropical fruit aroma with notes of ripe mango and butterscotch; medium-full body; rich, smooth, lush, toasty, ripe tropical fruit flavors; slightly harsh and oaky on the finish; lingering aftertaste. Standard quality. Highly recommended. *14.5% alcohol; 8,000 cases; 100% BF; 60% ML; released October 1998.* (Group Score: 15.5, 0/0/1; My Score: 16.5 [87/100], fifth place)

8. **1997 Far Niente**, Napa (\$40) – Medium-light golden yellow; intense, decidedly toasty, charred oak aroma with hints of burnt match and butterscotch; full body; rich, fleshy, slightly viscous, toasty, citrusy, green apple flavors; hard, woody finish; lingering aftertaste. Above-average quality. Needs another year or two of bottle aging. Highly recommended. *13.5% alcohol; 20,000 cases; 100% BF; 0% ML; released October 1998.* (Group Score: 15.4, 1/0/0; My Score: 16.5 [85/100], eighth place)

9. **1997 Chateau St. Jean**, "Belle Terre Vineyard," Alexander Valley (\$24) – Medium-light golden yellow; initially subdued, toasty, distinct Chardonnay aroma with notes of ripe peach and tropical fruit which developed with airing; full body; big, toasty, appley, tropical fruit flavors; slightly tart and hard on the finish; lingering aftertaste. Above-average quality. Seems like it may continue to improve with some bottle aging. Highly recommended. *14.4% alcohol; 8,500 cases; 100% BF; 100% ML; released January 1999.* (Group Score: 15.4, 0/1/0; My Score: 16.5 [87/100], sixth place)

10. **1997 Murphy-Goode**, "Reserve, Island Block," Alexander Valley (\$24) – Medium-light golden yellow; pleasant, forward, toasty, tropical fruit aroma with overtones of creamy oak; medium-full to full body; big, rich, toasty flavors; well structured; somewhat tart and woody on the finish; lingering aftertaste. Above-average quality. Seems to have too much oak for the fruit. Recommended. *13% alcohol; 4,800 cases; 100% BF; 49% ML; released February 1999.* (Group Score: 15.3, 0/1/0; My Score: 16 [84/100], tenth place)

11. **1997 Benziger**, "Sangiacomo Vineyards," Carneros (\$25) Medium-light golden yellow; earthy, tight, green apple aroma with hints of dill and buttered popcorn; medium-full body; full, lemony, ripe tropical fruit flavors with oaky overtones; slightly tart on the finish; lingering aftertaste. Above-average quality. Recommended. *13.4% alcohol; 345 cases; 100% BF; 100% ML; released January 1999.* (Group Score: 15.3, 0/0/1; My Score: 16 [84/100], eleventh place)

12. **1997 William Hill Winery**, "Reserve," Napa Valley (\$20) – Medium-light golden yellow; floral, slightly perfumed, spicy, appley aroma; medium-full body; tight, appley, woody flavors; tight, hard finish; lingering aftertaste. Standard quality. *13.7% alcohol; case production not available; 100% BF; 100% ML; released October 1998.* (Group Score: 15.0, 0/0/0; My Score: 15.5 [79/100], twelfth place)

True Ranking: [1, 2, 3, 4] [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11] [12]