

LE DRUNK ROOSTER - BEST OF THE NEW CHARDONNAYS

SPECIAL TRAVEL ISSUE: THE INSIDER'S GUIDE

FOOD & WINE

MAY 2009

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Grilled steak tacos with avocado salsa—ideal with a spicy Zinfandel RECIPE, P. 46

easy lessons from a napa wine school



2007 Le Drunk Rooster (\$14) While this earthy, flavorful white may have a silly name, it's a serious Chardonnay for the money. It's produced by a family-owned winery located in Southern France.

tasting&testing

WINE-TASTING ROOM

crisp new chardonnays

After years of devotion to oaky Chardonnay, American wine drinkers have had enough of these big, lush, buttery whites and are moving toward newer, leaner, fresher styles modeled on Chablis. F&W's *Ray Isle* finds the best.



BEST OF THE NEW CHARDONNAYS

2008 Brompton Unoaked (\$11) Brompton, a second label from top South African producer Rustenberg, takes its name from the estate's Jersey bull, Brompton Beacon Bloomer. Despite those stolid origins, this Chardonnay is delicate and fragrant.

2008 Cousiño-Macul (\$11) This bright, apple Chilean Chardonnay goes from vine to stainless steel tank to bottle without ever touching even a scrap of oak.

2007 Monjardín El Cerezo Unoaked (\$12) Spain's Navarra is known for red wines, not Chardonnay, but this is a great example of the unoaked style: citrusy and vivid, with a light prickle to its texture.

2007 Babich Hawke's Bay Unoaked (\$13) New Zealand's Hawke's Bay is a source for ripe Chardonnays, many of which—like this melon-inflected wine—are made in an unoaked style.

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2007 Clos LaChance Glittering-Throated Emerald (\$15) The warm climate of California's Central Coast gives this unoaked bottling (named after a type of hummingbird) tropical-fruit flavors like ripe mango.

2008 Grant Burge Benchmark (\$15) Australian winemaker Grant Burge is famous for his intense Shirazes. But this Chardonnay, with its juicy, lemon-curd character, shows that he knows his way around whites, too.

2008 Kim Crawford Unoaked (\$17) Kim Crawford was one of the first wineries in New Zealand to proclaim its Chardonnay as unoaked; it is

now on the 12th vintage of this clean, crisp, minerally white, which is made with grapes from the Hawke's Bay and Gisborne regions.

2006 Louis Latour Le Chardonnay (\$17) One of Burgundy's most legendary producers, Latour is renowned for its wonderful (and expensive) *grand cru* Corton-Charlemagne. This new Latour bottling, so named because the grapes come from the village of Chardonnay, is creamy but very focused.

2007 Domaine Chandon Unoaked (\$19) This Napa Valley sparkling-wine producer also makes a number of good bottlings sans bubbles, among them this robust apple- and pear-inflected Chardonnay.

2007 Domaine Thibert Père et Fils Mâcon-Prissé (\$20) A brother-and-sister team run this Mâcon estate, producing absurdly good wines for the money. This earthy bottling tastes like good Meursault, though without the oak and at a fraction of the price.



We want purity and finesse. If we used new oak on our wines, the oak would cover everything. —CHABLIS PRODUCER CHRISTIAN MOREAU