

Southern Hemisphere Chardonnays

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
June 2019

Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$15 or less

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ere we are in June already, and it's safe to say that the year is flying by before our eyes. Hurricane season is upon us again, along with all the reminders to be prepared for anything. Each year we sit in anticipation of the “big one” while at the same time hoping it will never arrive.

Regardless of how you prepare for our South Florida storm season, I'm sure you always include shopping for the necessary provisions, such as hurricane party wine. While red wines may be hard to swallow in the sticky mid-storm heat, and sparkling wine shows off as too celebratory for a tornado watch, white wines seem to be the most appropriate option for tropical storm rations.

Far from your mother's favorite California Chardonnay, these South American labels offer some variety to the varietal that is both refreshing and forward thinking. From such southern regions as Patagonia and the Bio Bio Valley, check these economical Chardonnays from Argentina and Chile that pair well with a stormy summer.

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The **2017 Santa Julia Chardonnay** out of Mendoza, Argentina, has a clean, crisp nose with aromas of pineapple, pear, and lemon zest. A lovely medium-bodied wine greets you in the palate with fruit-forward flavors. Mild acidity holds throughout the finish for an overall pleasing wine that you might use to accompany white fish with creamy sauce.

For something a little more interesting, venture over to the Chilean wine aisle for the **2018 Porta Reserva Chardonnay**

from the Bio Bio Valley. Sharp minerality presents itself on the nose, but so do some unusual fruit aromas like banana. Lively lemon joins peach and other fruits on the palate, and blend for a smooth, lengthy finish. Overall, a fresh unoaked Chardonnay at a decent price.

Also from Chile, the **2018 Natura Chardonnay** is made from sustainably farmed organic grapes and is another unoaked option. The nose is bursting with citrus aromas presented in their freshest expression. Tropical fruits like pineapple pop through the lemon and grapefruit on the palate for a dynamic mix of flavors. Light bodied and clean, Natura Chardonnay would pair well with slightly seared scallops served with a citrus sauce.

Organic and unoaked is a theme with many of these South American wines, and the **2018 Domaine Bousquet Chardonnay**

from Tupungato in Mendoza falls in line. I've written about these wines before, but at our Vino price point, Domaine Bousquet's quality South American wines are hard to beat. On the nose there are strong aromas of ripe green apple and a tropical fruit medley, with some lemon citrus harmonizing in the background. In the mouth, this wine shows great Chardonnay typicity, with a medium body, dominant fruit flavors, and a crisp, citrus finish.

A great value Chardonnay that embraces some oak aging is the **2018 Cruz Alta Reserve Chardonnay** from Mendoza.

This 100-percent Chardonnay is aged in 30 percent new oak for seven months, adding a bit of complexity to the wine without overpowering. Citrus fruit and tart green apple still dominate the nose and palate, with some vanilla and a hint of honey smoothing out the edges. Despite the oak, this wine maintains a surprisingly refreshing character that lingers on the finish.

Speaking of surprising, the **2017 Atrevida Chardonnay**, also from Mendoza, contains some complexity and weight without the oak. There's subtle baking spice on the nose, along with honey, citrus, and banana. Atrevida is a medium-bodied Chardonnay with strong, rounded flavors of citrus and green apple on the tongue. For less than \$12, this Chardonnay punches

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above its weight and is worth a try if you like more body without the nuance of oak.

For something a little more interesting out of the emerging wine-producing region of Neuquén in Patagonia, Argentina, try the **2014 Quimay Chardonnay**, the oldest on our list. Quimay means “oasis” in the native language of the Mapuche indigenous people who inhabit this part of Patagonia, and that is what this Chardonnay represents. My notes exactly, “Wow, great Chardonnay!” With clean, sharp aromas of ripe pear, pronounced lemon, and apple, the nose of the wine welcomes your senses to imbibe. The acidity is strong but balanced with the fruit flavors and weight of the wine. Citrus lingers on the palate with a kick of zest at the back of the tongue. In the world of Chardonnays, this wine may be the perfect “Quimay.”

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