

AS SEEN IN
FOOD & WINE



**The Best Value White Wine
You're Not Drinking Yet**

*Chenin Blanc delivers range, value
and weeknight-friendly pricing.*

**2023
DRY CHENIN BLANC**
Clarksburg

“Sonoma County’s Dry Creek Vineyard has been making dry Chenin Blanc for decades now, and it’s been a perennial overachiever at its price. It’s fresh and succulent, with flavors that recall melon and grapefruit.”

— RAY ISLE
SEPTEMBER 2025





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October 2025

BOTTLE SERVICE

WHAT TO DRINK NOW

**The
Comeback
Grape**
Overlooked
for years,
Chenin Blanc
is back.

By Ray Isle

produced by RAY ISLE AND LUCY SIMON photography by GREG DUPREE

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IN SOMMELIER LAND, Chenin Blanc is a name to conjure with, a must-have for any of-the-moment wine list. But head past those borders into the world of regular U.S. wine drinkers, and this white variety remains one of the least familiar great wine grapes of the world.

Chenin was popular in the U.S., once upon a time. In 1988, there were over 36,000 acres of it planted in California; today, there are a little over 4,000. Yet the winds of wine change might be blowing. Those winemakers who do have a passion for Chenin often sell out their wines swiftly. Admittedly, some of these are made in minuscule quantities—Palisades Canyon in Napa Valley makes one of the best U.S. Chenins I've ever had, but it makes under 100 cases of it—others, though, are not.

And, of course, Chenin can be found in abundance in its homeland, the Loire Valley in France, as well as in South Africa. No matter where it's made, qualities that sommeliers love are present: scintillating acidity, a key to its versatility on the table; a range of textures from crisp and light to lush and rich; compelling flavors on a citrus-apple-peach spectrum, sometimes accented with honey notes. As winemaker John Skupny of Lang & Reed winery, whose 2023 Mendocino Chenin was one of the stars of F&W's recent Chenin tasting, says, "It's great to see such a versatile, complex, and delicious grape finally have its day, especially when it comes from so many different regions in the world." I couldn't agree more.

UNITED STATES

2023 DRY CREEK VINEYARD CLARKSBURG DRY CHENIN BLANC (\$18)

Sonoma County's Dry Creek Vineyard has been making Chenin Blanc for decades now, and the wine's been a perennial overachiever at its price. It's fresh and succulent, with flavors that recall melon and grapefruit.

2024 APERTURE CHENIN BLANC (\$35)

Aperture Cellars, based in Sonoma County, sources the fruit for this high-toned, passion fruit-scented Chenin from vines in the Clarksburg area, down in the Sacramento River delta. It's fresh, tingy, and a joy to drink, and it reveals more complexity with each sip.

2024 BIRICHINO JURASSIC PARK VINEYARD CHENIN BLANC (\$28)

The Jurassic Park Vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley was planted in 1978, making these ungrafted vines among the older Chenin plantings in Southern California. This white is fresh and peppery, with a briskly mineral finish.

2023 LANG & REED MENDOCINO CHENIN BLANC (\$35)

Lang & Reed's John Skupny is a longtime cheerleader for Loire varieties in California. He started with Cabernet Franc, then added this lightly toasty Chenin to his lineup. It's full of lime zest and ripe citrus flavors, with a luxurious texture.

2024 ROCOCO OWN ROOTED CHENIN BLANC (\$28)

Winemaker Natalie Brown founded California's Rococo specifically to focus on Chenin Blanc. She makes several single-vineyard bottlings plus this lively multivineyard blend, which tastes like a burst of tangerine and melon flavor, then lingers.

2023 LAS JARAS CÉZANNE CHENIN BLANC (\$36)

Joel Burt and Eric Wareheim at Las Jaras named this crisp, apricot-accented Chenin after Burt's daughter Cézanne. It's made using grapes from the hillside Norgard Vineyard on the east side of the Ukiah Valley.