

Wine Spectator

12 California Chardonnays

New reviews of outstanding whites from the Russian River Valley and elsewhere in the Golden State

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Chardonnays impressed this week in the California office's blind tastings, with plenty of wines to recommend. At the top of the list is Athair, a Sonoma-based brand that makes terrific Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. Captûre, which had already earned praise for its vibrant Sauvignon Blancs, impressed again with a classy, rich Chardonnay.

A trio of Chardonnays from Chasseur showcase winemaker Bill Hunter's knack for sourcing grapes from some of the best vineyards in west Sonoma. Eric Kent founder Kent Humphries continues to make an impression not only with great wine, but also with imaginative and beautiful labels that feature the work of talented artists.

For fans of wine made in an unoaked style, check out the Morgan Metallico Un-Oaked and the Marimar Estate Acero Unoaked. Both of these wines showcase Chardonnays's pure fruit flavors with vibrant acidity.

ATHAIR Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2009 Score: 92 / \$32

A rich, creamy style that serves up lots of flavor, offering ripe pear and apple flavors, with a toasty graham cracker pie crust edge. This lingers, with butterscotch, honeysuckle and smoky wood notes that show a hint of roasted marshmallow. Drink now through 2018. 772 cases made. —J.L.

Note: This is an excerpt. Visit www.winespectator.com to read the article in its entirety.