

Tasting Notes – XIX 42

Exceptional

2014 **Sebastian Damp** Chablis Premier Cru, “Les Vaillons” (\$30): Chablis may be out of favor on the West Coast, but one sniff and one sip of this all-Chardonnay wine speaks volumes, especially to those who prefer classic, subtle French White Burgundy. The faint slate/mineral notes, dried lime peel, and hint of fresh anise lead to a bone-dry mid-palate that’s still loaded with fruit. Premier Cru wines like this cannot be made in California—until you try a wine like the one two below in this list.

2013 **Frog’s Leap** Zinfandel, Napa Valley (\$30): The aroma of this perfectly balanced wine is raspberry and a trace of strawberry. The entry is crisp, but not tart and the spice notes are ideal to pair with Italian-seasoned foods. A striking wine that’s a great value.

2014 **Frog’s Leap** Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$32): The parallels between the Damp Chablis and this wine are obvious. This wine was “barrel fermented” for about the length of time it took to ferment it, then spent the rest of its out-of-bottle time in concrete vats on lees. The aroma is striking in that it is one of the purest Chardonnay aromas you are likely ever to see outside Chablis. The entry is delicate and the flavors so pristine that many people would be hard-pressed to say it’s Chardonnay. But it is so tasty it’s hard to put down the glass.

2013 **Groth** Chardonnay, Napa Valley, Hillview Vineyard (\$30): Relatively rich aroma with hints of citrus and white peach, the wine’s greatest attribute is a succulent mid-palate that doesn’t lean too heavily on the barrel.

2013 **La Crema** Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$30): The terrific terroir of RRV really shines through here with tropical and lime notes. Oak is a tad prominent, but the bright acidity saves the wine from being too weighty. Best with dishes with cream or butter.

2014 **Tablas Creek** Côtes de Tablas, Paso Robles (\$25): If you like the richness and spice notes of a southern Rhône white, this wine has a spicy nose and richer mid-palate to work nicely with grilled seafood with cream or butter. The Viognier adds spice, and there is a light mineral note from Grenache Blanc. Really tasty.

Very Highly Recommended

2012 **Murrieta's Well** Red Blend, Livermore Valley, "The Spur"(\$21): The blend of 33% Petite Sirah and 31% Cab is fascinating since both grapes add a depth to the aroma and aftertaste. The dark berry fruit isn't overripe and the wine's not very tannic. A nicely crafted blend.