

## The Whites—Riesling to Chardonnay

### Lecture 5

Each of the noble grape varieties has unique characteristics that are retained regardless of origin, from France to Chile, California to Tasmania. They are some of the most popular grape varieties ... and they are popular for a reason. They make a great range of wines at all price points, from entry-level ones to some of the highest-quality wines in the world.

#### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

For this lecture, the recommended wines may come from any winery. Just be sure to match the grape variety and the region.

- A dry Riesling, preferably Eden/Clare Valley from Australia or Austria
- A sweet Riesling, preferably a German Kabinett or Spätlese
- A New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc
- A Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé
- A Chablis AC from France, not from a box
- An oaked California Chardonnay



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The **noble grape varieties** are those grape varieties known primarily for how they retain their basic characteristics no matter where in the world they are planted. They are consequently some of the most popular, best-known grape varieties, and they come in a wide range of styles at all price points. This lecture covers the three white noble grape varieties: Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay.

Riesling has one of the widest ranges of good food-and-wine pairings. They can be dry to sweet, delicate to luscious, and are usually intensely aromatic. If off-dry or sweet, the combined sweetness and acidity increase the wine's

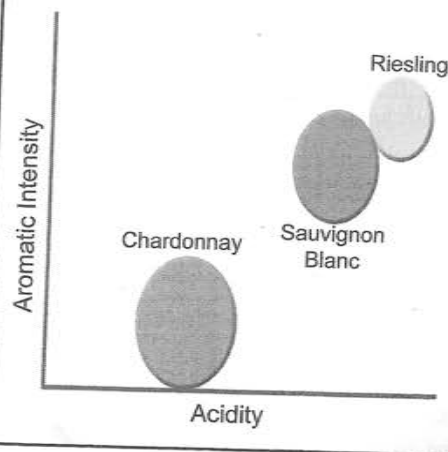
length. Riesling can be drunk young, yet because of its high acidity, it makes some of the longest-lived wines in the world. It is typically pale in the glass, especially when young, and may exhibit greenish/grayish tones. Its fruit flavors range from citrus to stone fruits. It is rarely oaked.

Riesling has a thin skin and is easily infected by fungal disease. While this sounds negative, when infected by a fungus called *Botrytis cinerea*, the grape's sugars become concentrated, which adds honey and dried fruit aromas to the wine. Riesling can also take on a diesel-like aroma as it ages—also not a negative, as it adds to the wine's complexity and enhances the other flavors.

Riesling grapes generally like cooler climates, with the highest concentration of vines found in Germany, but it can adapt to many climates and many types of soils.

Sauvignon Blanc wines range from pale, especially when the grapes are grown in cool climates, to golden, especially when oaked. Like Riesling, it tends to have a greenish hue and can be just as aromatically intense—sometimes downright pungent—with aromas of gooseberries, asparagus, and fresh-cut grass. Grapes from cooler climates display citrus aromas, while grapes from warmer climates display passion fruit, melon, and fresh figs, and from certain regions (particularly the Loire Valley) they can be so mineral-like that they remind you of gun flint.

#### White Wine Grapes



The white noble grapes vary greatly in character.

Sauvignon Blanc is higher in acid than even the most acidic Chardonnays, and good Sauvignon Blanc shows incredible finesse.

Unlike Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc sometimes sees some oak during the production process, which adds vanilla bean and toast to the aromatics. It is a good sharer and tends to blend well with other varieties, such as Sémillon. It can also stand slightly warmer climates than Riesling. However, it does not age well—it is best drunk when young and vibrant.

Chardonnay is among the most prolific of all wine grapes. It grows well practically anywhere, can be made in almost any style, and produces good-to-great wines at every price point. Even in its most delicate form, Chablis, Chardonnay is rounder and fuller in the mouth than Riesling, and when grown in warm climates, it is very full-bodied. It is known for apple-like aromas—Granny Smith from cool climates and Red Delicious from warm ones, where it also takes on tropical fruit characteristics. It shows excellent sense of place—it is practically a blank canvas.

In terms of winemaking, Chardonnay stands up to a fair amount of manhandling. Many Chardonnays go **malolactic fermentation**, which replaces green-apple flavors with creamy or buttery notes. It may also benefit from **lees stirring**, which adds complexity, richness, and a creamy texture. And lastly, it can handle a fair amount of oak. When Chardonnay's structure is right, it can last for decades; in fact, Chardonnay is one of the reasons why vintage Champagne can age so well. ■

### Important Terms

**lees stirring:** Deliberate agitation of the dead yeast and skins at the bottom of a wine barrel or tank.

**malolactic fermentation:** The conversion of malic acid to lactic acid via *Lactobacillus* bacteria.

**noble grape varieties:** The seven most prolific and adaptable varieties of wine grape in the world, including Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah.

### Tasting Notes

In this tasting, we try two each of the three noble white grape varieties. The differences among the grapes will be on display, and we see noticeable effects of both climate and winemaking style on each grape.

	Dry Riesling	Sweet Riesling	Sauvignon Blanc
Grape	100% Riesling	100% Riesling	100% Sauvignon Blanc
Region	Australia, Austria	Germany	New Zealand
Oaked?	No	No	No
Color			
Aromas			
Acid/Sweetness			
Body			
Finish/Length			

	Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé	Chablis AC	Oaked Chardonnay
Grape	100% Sauvignon Blanc	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay
Region	Loire Valley, France	Chablis, Burgundy, France	California
Oaked?	Yes	No	Yes
Color			
Aromas			
Acid/Sweetness			
Body			
Finish/Length			



Brancott Sauvignon Blanc

\$9.49

750ml



**Taste Profile**  
Fresh, Lime, Pear, Light-bodied

Vintage	NI (5 pts.)	FI (25 pts.)	FC (10 pts.)	B (5 pts.)	L (5 pts.)	Sum	+ 50	Final

**Style White:** Crisp, Oak, Elegant, Off-dry, Sweet

**Flavors:** Apple, Pear, Pineapple, Melon, Grapefruit, Orange, Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acidity:** High, Medium, Low

**Oak Level:** High, Medium, Touch of, None

**Body:** Light, Medium, Full

Nose Intensity(NI)	Fruit Intensity(FI)	Flavor Characteristics(FC)	Balance(B)	Length(L)		
1- Light	1-10 None	1-2 Undrinkable	1- Off	1- None		
2- Average	11-15 Soft	3-4 Ordinary	2- Slightly Off	2- Fades Quickly		
3- Pleasant	16-18 Ample	5-6 Good	3- Proportional	3- Lingering (30 secs)		
4- Inviting	19-20 Abundant	7-8 Very Good	4- Harmonious	4- Lengthy ( up to 1 minute)		
5- Highly Aromatic	21-23 Bountiful	9-10 Outstanding	5- Perfect	5- Everlasting ( > 1 minute)		
	24-25 Powerful					
95-100 Classic	90-94 Outstanding	85-89 Very Good	80-84 Good	76-79 Average	71-75 Below Average	65-70 Poor

Date Tasted: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





## Product Highlights

- For the 100% unoaked Chardonnay lover, bright fruit characters with hints of pear and mineral notes.
- Chablis pairs well with seafood and shellfish.

## Review

Chablis, Burgundy, France- With a bouquet and taste of Granny Smith apples, this 100% Chardonnay is unoaked, and offers hints of pear and mineral notes. The cool climate and slate soils of Chablis brings out a bracing acidity that pairs well with seafood and shellfish.

## Taste Profile

Crisp, Apple, Mineral, Medium-bodied

Vintage	NI (5 pts.)	FI (25 pts.)	FC (10 pts.)	B (5 pts.)	L (5 pts.)	Sum	+ 50	Final

**Style White:** Crisp, Oak, Elegant, Off-dry, Sweet

**Flavors:** Apple, Pear, Pineapple, Melon, Grapefruit, Orange, Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acidity:** High, Medium, Low

**Oak Level:** High, Medium, Touch of, None

**Body:** Light, Medium, Full

### Nose Intensity(NI)

- 1- Light
- 2- Average
- 3- Pleasant
- 4- Inviting
- 5- Highly Aromatic

### Fruit Intensity(FI)

- 1-10 None
- 11-15 Soft
- 16-18 Ample
- 19-20 Abundant
- 21-23 Bountiful
- 24-25 Powerful

### Flavor Characteristics(FC)

- 1-2 Undrinkable
- 3-4 Ordinary
- 5-6 Good
- 7-8 Very Good
- 9-10 Outstanding

### Balance(B)

- 1- Off
- 2- Slightly Off
- 3- Proportional
- 4- Harmonious
- 5- Perfect

### Length(L)

- 1- None
- 2- Fades Quickly
- 3- Lingering (30 secs)
- 4- Lengthy ( up to 1 minute)
- 5- Everlasting ( > 1 minute)

95-100  
Classic

90-94  
Outstanding

85-89  
Very Good

80-84  
Good

76-79  
Average

71-75  
Below Average

65-70  
Poor

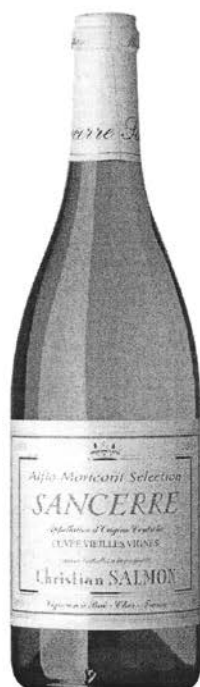
Date Tasted: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

# Salmon Sancerre Vieilles Vignes

# \$19.99

750ml



## Product Highlights

- This is simply elegance in a bottle.
- This wine would be perfect for a light style food.
- Fifth generation, family-owned winery.
- These aromatic wines boast freshness and complexity, typical of the limestone and clay terroir.

## Review

Sancerre, Loire Valley, France- Made from old vines, which intensifies the flavor, this estate bottled wine is a fine expression of Sauvignon Blanc. Refreshingly zesty, with crisp notes of citrus and minerals, dry and complex. Enjoy with soft cheeses like goat cheese.

## Taste Profile

Crisp, Citrus, Mineral, Medium-bodied

Vintage	NI (5 pts.)	FI (25 pts.)	FC (10 pts.)	B (5 pts.)	L (5 pts.)	Sum	+ 50	Final

**Style White:** Crisp, Oak, Elegant, Off-dry, Sweet

**Flavors:** Apple, Pear, Pineapple, Melon, Grapefruit, Orange, Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acidity:** High, Medium, Low

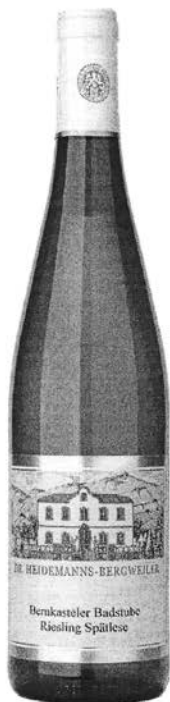
**Oak Level:** High, Medium, Touch of, None

**Body:** Light, Medium, Full

Nose Intensity(NI)	Fruit Intensity(FI)	Flavor Characteristics(FC)	Balance(B)	Length(L)
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	24-25 Powerful			

95-100 Classic	90-94 Outstanding	85-89 Very Good	80-84 Good	76-79 Average	71-75 Below Average	65-70 Poor
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Date Tasted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



## Product Highlights

- A seamless wine with complex fruit flavors from one of the Mosel's most acclaimed producers.

## Review

Bernkastel, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Germany- Boasting apricot, vanilla cream and citrus flavors, this Spatlese is delicate and harmonious with fruitness balanced by acidity and a touch of minerality. It comes from the town of Bernkastel and goes well with spicy dishes.

## Taste Profile

Semi-sweet, Apricot, Vanilla, Medium-bodied

Vintage	NI (5 pts.)	FI (25 pts.)	FC (10 pts.)	B (5 pts.)	L (5 pts.)	Sum	+ 50	Final

**Style White:** Crisp, Oak, Elegant, Off-dry, Sweet

**Flavors:** Apple, Pear, Pineapple, Melon, Grapefruit, Orange, Other: \_\_\_\_\_

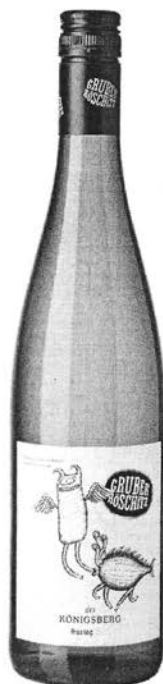
**Acidity:** High, Medium, Low

**Oak Level:** High, Medium, Touch of, None

**Body:** Light, Medium, Full

Nose Intensity(NI)	Fruit Intensity(FI)	Flavor Characteristics(FC)	Balance(B)	Length(L)		
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Date Tasted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



## Product Highlights

- The "queen" of Austrian grapes, this Riesling will pair well with mildly spicy foods and seafood appetizers.

## Review

Austria- Aromatic peach and apricot fruit intermingle with a complex minerality in this crisp, elegant Riesling. The long, flinty finish and bright notes of stone fruits make this an ideal pairing for light Asian fare and aperitifs.

## Taste Profile

Elegant, Peach, Mineral, Medium-bodied

Vintage	NI (5 pts.)	FI (25 pts.)	FC (10 pts.)	B (5 pts.)	L (5 pts.)	Sum	+ 50	Final

**Style White:** Crisp, Oak, Elegant, Off-dry, Sweet

**Flavors:** Apple, Pear, Pineapple, Melon, Grapefruit, Orange, Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acidity:** High, Medium, Low

**Oak Level:** High, Medium, Touch of, None

**Body:** Light, Medium, Full

### Nose Intensity(NI)

- 1- Light
- 2- Average
- 3- Pleasant
- 4- Inviting
- 5- Highly Aromatic

### Fruit Intensity(FI)

- 1-10 None
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### Flavor Characteristics(FC)

- 1-2 Undrinkable
- 3-4 Ordinary
- 5-6 Good
- 7-8 Very Good
- 9-10 Outstanding

### Balance(B)

- 1- Off
- 2- Slightly Off
- 3- Proportional
- 4- Harmonious
- 5- Perfect

### Length(L)

- 1- None
- 2- Fades Quickly
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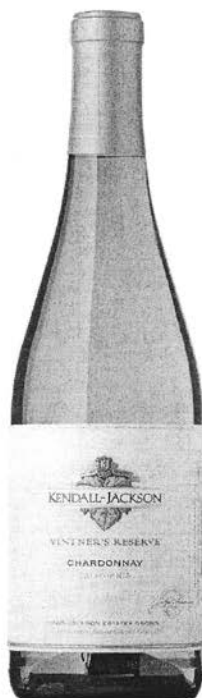
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



# Kendall Jackson Chardonnay 2013

# \$9.97

750ml



## Rating

Wine Enthusiast - 91

## Review

California- "This is a tasty and accessibly priced Chardonnay. It packs in lots of fruit flavor, vibrant acidity, rich texture and layers of oaky spice while showing a rare sense of seamlessness. Very Californian and compelling."

Vintage	NI (5 pts.)	FI (25 pts.)	FC (10 pts.)	B (5 pts.)	L (5 pts.)	Sum	+ 50	Final

**Style White:** Crisp, Oak, Elegant, Off-dry, Sweet

**Flavors:** Apple, Pear, Pineapple, Melon, Grapefruit, Orange, Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Acidity:** High, Medium, Low

**Oak Level:** High, Medium, Touch of, None

**Body:** Light, Medium, Full

Nose Intensity(NI)	Fruit Intensity(FI)	Flavor Characteristics(FC)	Balance(B)	Length(L)		
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Date Tasted: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_