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## THE CHRONICLE'S WINE SELECTIONS

### Chardonnay from Napa Valley and its sub-appellations

When buying Napa Valley Chardonnay, there's one geographic point to keep in mind: Carneros is way better than points north.

Of the 69 Chardonnays we tasted, just 27 were from Carneros. Yet of the 16 we consider worthy of ratings of two stars or more, 13 are from Napa's Carneros subappellation. That means we liked almost half the Chardonnays from Carneros, and just three of 42 from other parts of Napa Valley.

Both of those reactions are extreme for us: We rarely like a category as well as the Carneros Chardonnays, or dislike one as much as the non-Carneros Napa Chardonnays.

Why? It's all in the fog that settles into the Carneros region (which also extends partly into Sonoma County), keeping the grapes cool, maintaining their natural acidity and preventing the overripeness that plagues Chardonnay grapes in points north. We also found the use of oak more judicious with the Carneros Chards, though that's probably because the fruit was better to begin with.



### **2004 Clos Du Val Carneros Chardonnay**

Founded in 1972 by French winemaker Bernard Portet, Clos du Val aims for a French style that's very notable here. This is the most Chablis-like of the Chardonnays we tasted, with strong aromas of mineral and dirt, stony flavors and lemon fruit in the background that persists throughout the rounded finish.