

TASTING HIGHLIGHTS

7 Expressive Oregon Chardonnays Up to 92 Points

Oregon's star white grape shines in these new reviews of wines from Willamette Valley and beyond, most priced less than \$35

By April Louis

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Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.

Oregon's cool climate and diverse soils have long made it a haven for Pinot Noir production, particularly in Willamette Valley. Those conditions also make the Beaver State an ideal region for dynamic white wines, particularly Chardonnays, with many wineries embracing a fresh, mouthwatering style. This week's selection spotlights delicious examples from recent tastings.

The top scorer, Nicolas-Jay's Affinités bottling, showcases tropical fruit and orange peel flavors with mineral accents. The winery was founded by Burgundian winemaker Jean-Nicolas Méo and entertainment executive Jay Boberg to create Burgundy-like wines in Willamette Valley. Likewise, Siduri was founded by winemaker Adam Lee with a focus on Pinot Noir; Lee sold the winery to California-based Jackson Family Wines in 2015. This gave Lee, who still makes the wines, more access to premier vineyard sites and enabled him to add Willamette Valley Chardonnay to his lineup. The results are on display in the fuller-bodied 2020 below, with rich tropical fruit and apricot flavors.

Turning to an Oregon mainstay, Sokol Blosser—founded by Susan Sokol and Bill Blosser—is one of the oldest winery operations in the state, planting its first vines in the Dundee Hills AVA in 1971. Today, the winery makes a wide range of red, white and sparkling wines, including its 2020 Dundee Hills Chardonnay with generous flavors of apple and lemon joined by almond and peach notes.

Generally, it's not difficult to find terrific values among Oregon's Chardonnays, such as Chehalem's Inox bottling, a steelier expression with lemon and lime flavors; it's a great change of pace for those looking to explore Chardonnays without oak influence. You can also look to A to Z Wineworks' quaffable white, which is full of tropical fruit and pear notes. It's a great buy at just \$16.



NICOLAS-JAY

Chardonnay Willamette Valley Affinités 2020

Score: 92 | \$50

WS review: Handsomely built, with deep and multilayered flavors of tropical fruit and orange peel accented by dusky spice and hints of mineral. Drink now. 359 cases made.—Tim Fish