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### **TASTING HIGHLIGHTS**

## **8 Excellent Sauvignon Blanc Wines Up to 94 Points**

Wines from Napa Valley, Bordeaux, Friuli and beyond feature in our new reviews of recently tasted whites, a few priced \$35 or less



Napa Valley's Spottswoode, a producer of impressive Sauvignon Blanc, employs some very motivated help in the vineyard ... (Yianni Stone/Spottswoode Winery)



**By Rachel Whiteman**

Jan 4, 2024

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

Celebrated for its refreshing flavors, signature herbal aromatics and high levels of acidity, **Sauvignon blanc** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/sauvignon-blanc-57815>] is one of the most beloved grape varieties around the world, with **acclaimed versions** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/is-white-wine-enjoying-a-sales-boom-or-just-sauvignon-blanc>] coming from regions such as **New Zealand** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/eyes-on-the-prize-new-zealand-wines-tasting-report-103123>] and France's **Loire Valley** [<https://www.winespectator.com/vintage-charts/region/loire>]. (The former exports more than 5 million cases of Sauvignon Blanc to the United States each year.) But that popularity doesn't mean you can't find excellent Sauvignon Blanc values. This week's Tasting Highlights features impressive versions priced less than \$50 (including several at \$35 or less), most with scores at 90 points or higher.

Located in northeast Italy, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia is an **important area for crisp Italian white wines** [<https://www.winespectator.com/articles/vibrant-whites-from-friuli-48839>]. Situated on the borders of Slovenia, Austria and the Adriatic Sea, it has a maritime **climate** [<https://www.winespectator.com/glossary?page=1&submitted=Y&word=climate>] with cool evenings and warm days, paving the way for fresh whites with great character and complexity. Pinot Grigio is a major grape in the region; but Sauvignon Blanc similarly thrives there, particularly in the vineyards of the smaller Collio and Friuli Colli Orientali **DOCs** [[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/denominazione\\_di\\_origine\\_controllata\\_%28d.o.c.%29\\_](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/denominazione_di_origine_controllata_%28d.o.c.%29_)]

, where hilly terrains and mineral-rich soils impart distinctive freshness and fullness to the finished wines.

## Bordeaux and California: Key Sauvignon Blanc Regions

While Bordeaux is most famous for its full-bodied reds, the region also offers celebrated white wines made primarily from Sauvignon Blanc, which winemakers often blend with the Sémillon variety. The Pessac-Léognan [AOC](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/appellation\\_d%27origine\\_contr%C3%B4l%C3%A9e\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/appellation_d%27origine_contr%C3%B4l%C3%A9e)

is home to many of the best-known white wines in Bordeaux. Here, many winemakers ferment their whites in oak

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/barrel\\_fermented\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/barrel_fermented), resulting in wines with complex honeysuckle, toast and ripe fruit flavors. Even better, these are often [bottlings you can set down to age](#) [\[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/is-it-true-that-all-wine-improves-with-age\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/is-it-true-that-all-wine-improves-with-age).

Among white grape varieties, Chardonnay continues to reign in California. However, Sauvignon Blanc has become [increasingly important in the Golden State](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/upward-trajectory-california-sauvignon-blanc-wine-focus-053123\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/upward-trajectory-california-sauvignon-blanc-wine-focus-053123) and across the United States. Northern California is a bastion for the grape:

Cool foggy nights in Sonoma and Napa Valley help preserve the natural acidity of Sauvignon Blanc, while warm and sunny days help grapes ripen and develop their flavors. Even better, consumers now have access to diverse California Sauvignon Blanc styles, as winemakers employ a range of techniques, from [stainless steel fermentation](#)

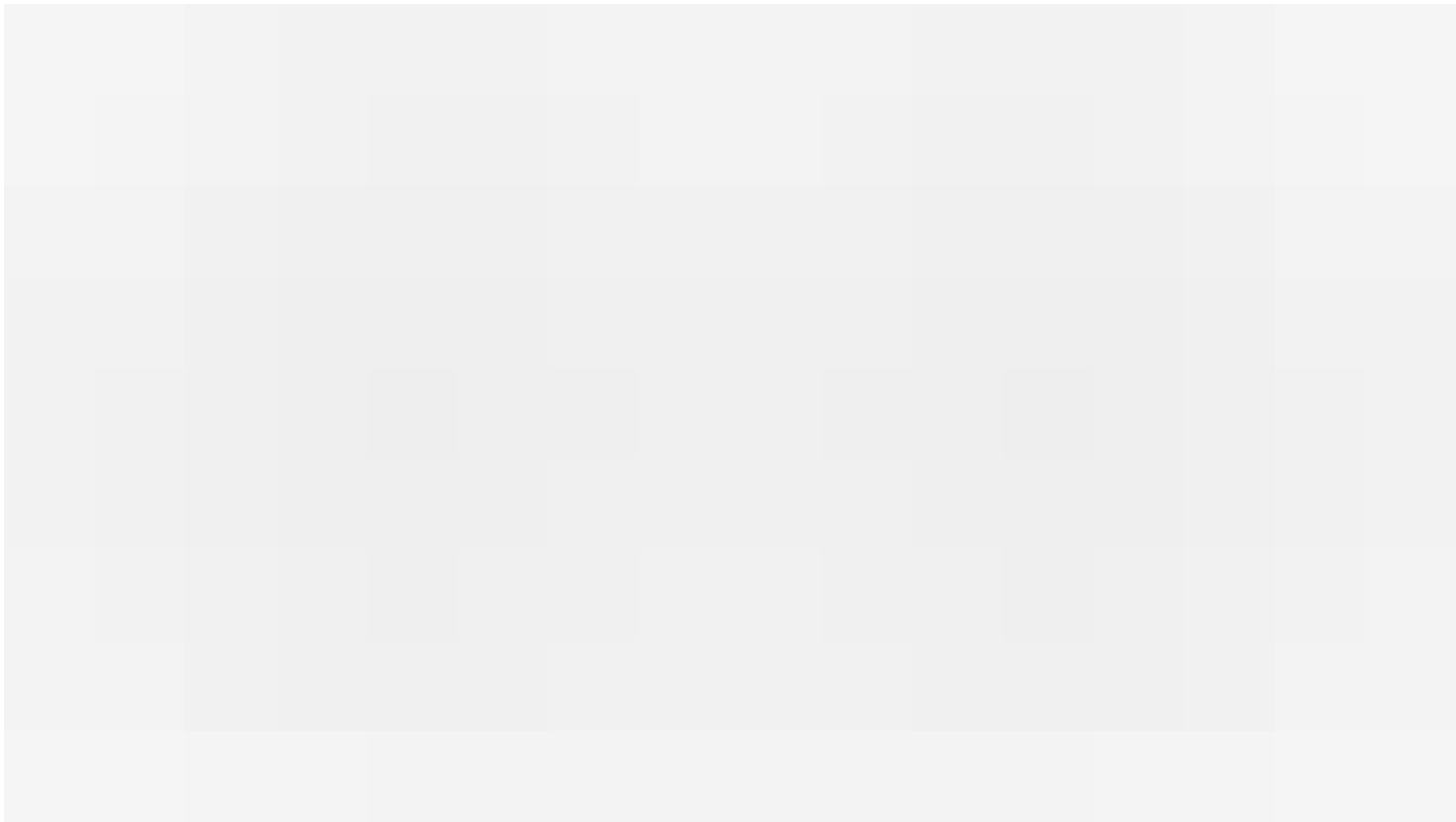
[\[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/what-s-the-difference-between-wood-vs-steel-vs-concrete-wine-fermentors\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/what-s-the-difference-between-wood-vs-steel-vs-concrete-wine-fermentors) to barrel aging

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/barrel\\_aged\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/barrel_aged).

In the selection below, you'll also find an American [canned wine](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/tags/cans\]](https://www.winespectator.com/tags/cans) made not only from Sauvignon Blanc, but also from the Chenin Blanc and Viognier grapes.

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## SPOTTSWOODE

Sauvignon Blanc Napa-Sonoma Counties 2022

Score: 94 | \$45

**WS review:** This generous version displays intense aromatics of honeysuckle, passionfruit and litsea oil up front. Shows preserved lemon, grilled peach, dried pineapple, ginger and mango notes, with details of makrut lime leaf that linger on the long, vibrant and expressive finish. Drink now. 4467 cases made. From California.—*MaryAnn Worobiec*

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## **GAMBLE FAMILY**

Sauvignon Blanc Yountville Gamble Vineyard 2022

Score: 93 | \$45

**WS review:** This stunning version displays an intense, aromatic and vivid mix of honeysuckle, beeswax, mango and passionfruit notes, with details of candied ginger and litsea oil on the long, expressive and mouthwatering finish. Drink now. 1,000 cases made. From California.—  
*M.W.*

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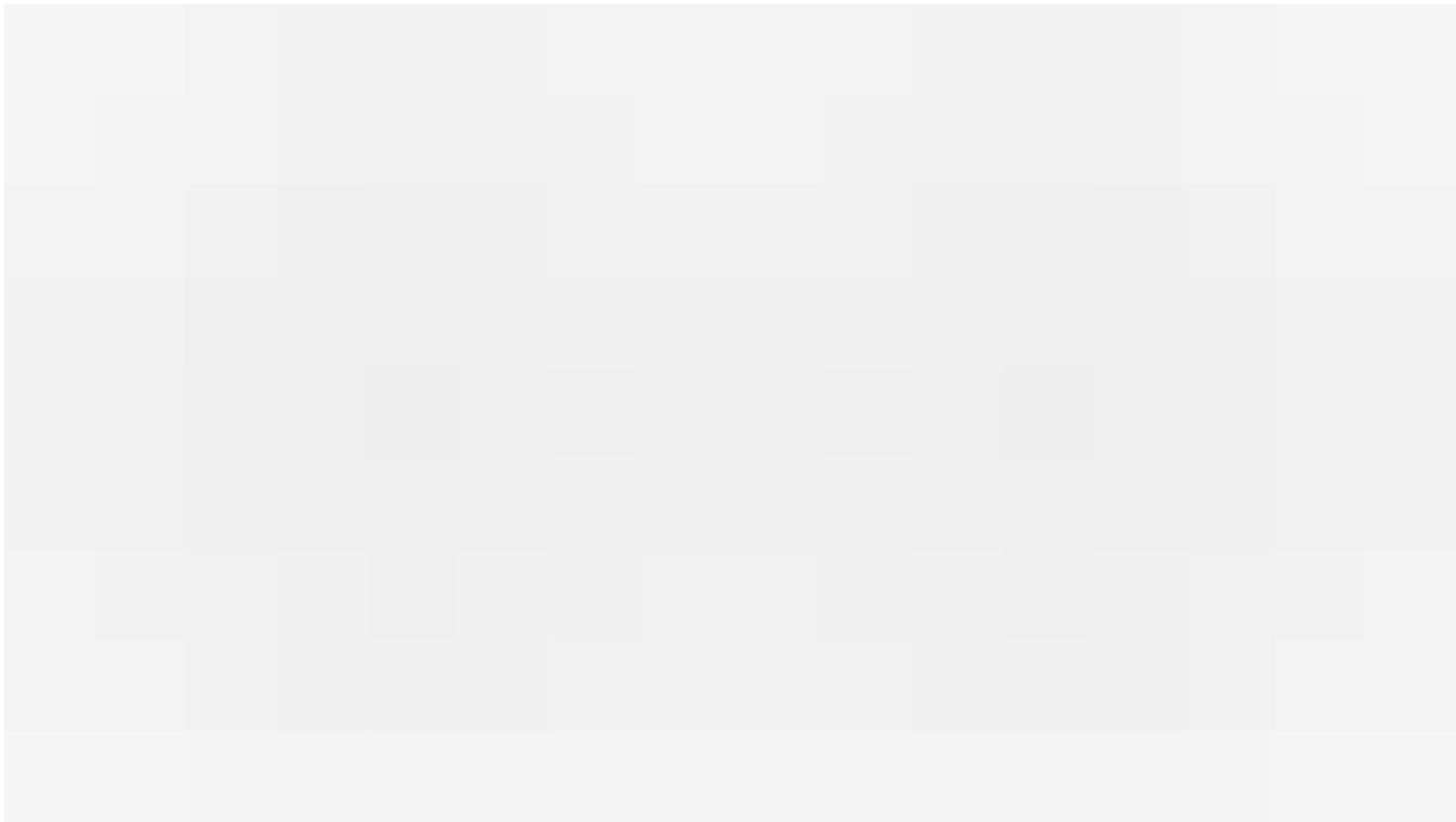
## CHÂTEAU OLIVIER

Pessac-Léognan White 2021

Score: 91 | \$45

**WS review:** Vibrant, with delicious white peach and white apricot notes, laced with chamomile, honeysuckle and salted butter accents. The fun, juicy finish has excellent energy. Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon. Drink now through 2027. 1,500 cases made, 300 cases imported. From France.—*James Molesworth*

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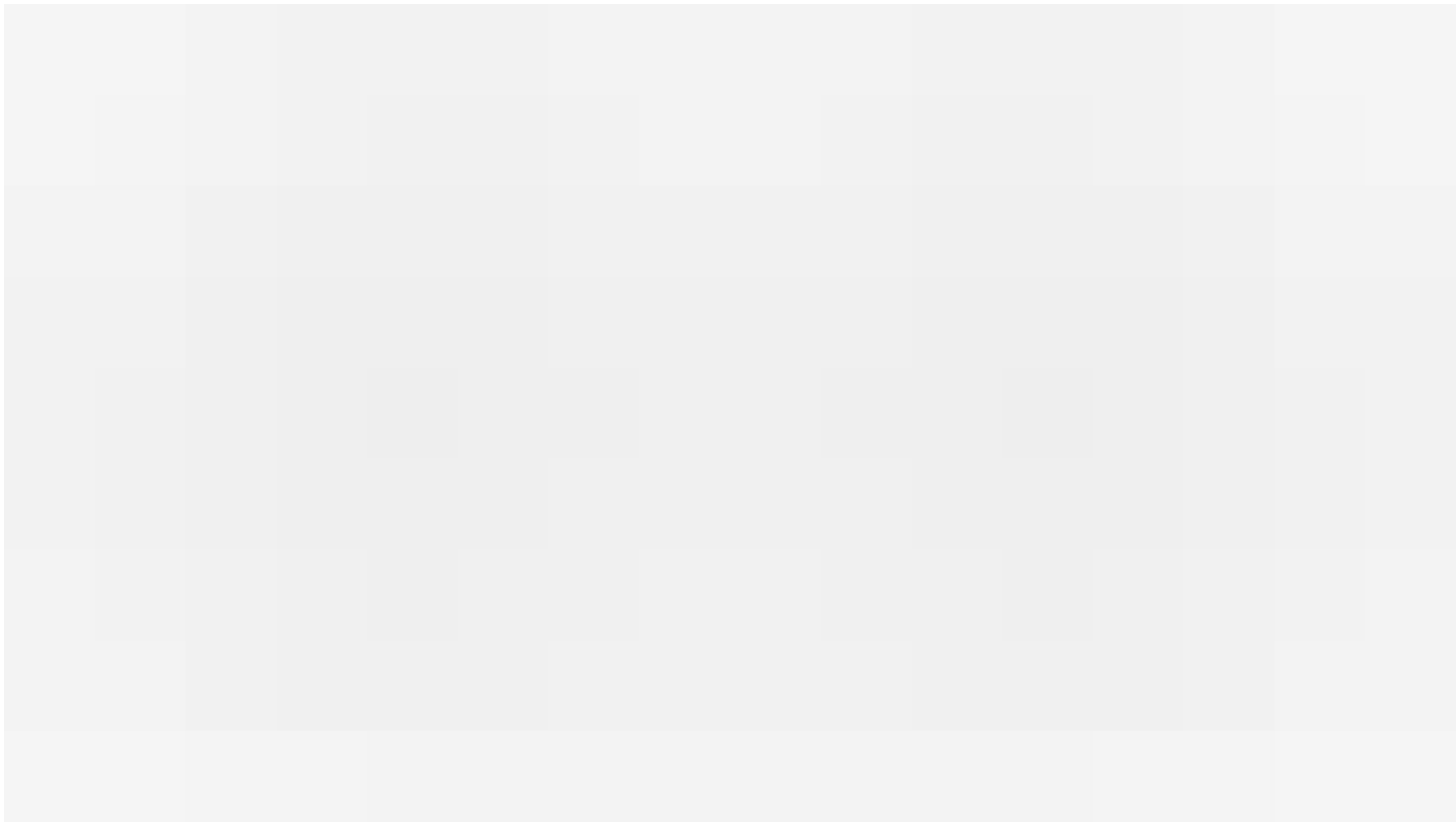
## LIVIO FELLUGA

Sauvignon Collio 2022

Score: 90 | \$35

**WS review:** A lively Sauvignon, this is sleek and mouthwatering, with hints of chive blossom, pink grapefruit zest, green melon and sliced almond. Drink now through 2027. 700 cases imported. From Italy.—*Alison Napjus*

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## CHÂTEAU LATOUR-MARTILLAC

Pessac-Léognan White 2021

Score: 90 | \$40

**WS review:** Features a fresh mix of Key lime pith, honeysuckle and chamomile notes backed by yellow apple accents. Lingers on the persistent finish. Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon. Drink now through 2026. 2,500 cases made, 600 cases imported. From France.—*J.M.*

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## LA TUNELLA

Sauvignon Friuli Colli Orientali 2022

Score: 89 | \$22

**WS review:** Offering chive blossom and tarragon aromatics, this creamy Sauvignon layers flavors of creamed pear, lemon curd, ground ginger and white pepper. Tangy finish. Drink now. 6,000 cases made, 1,800 cases imported. From Italy.—*A.N.*

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## FANTINEL

Sauvignon Blanc Friuli Sun Goddess 2022

Score: 88 | \$23

**WS review:** This snappy, light-bodied white offers ruby red grapefruit and melon flavors, with accents of stone, tarragon and white pepper. Drink now. 8,400 cases made, 7,000 cases imported. From Italy.—*A.N.*

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## WEST + WILDER

White American NV

Score: 88 | \$18 / 250ml

**WS review:** Elegant and aromatic, offering peach, yellow apple and ripe melon notes, with candied ginger, honeysuckle and a touch of green tea on the juicy finish. Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc and Viognier. Drink now. 4850 cases made. From the United States.—*M.W.*

## Getting to Know the Wide World of Sauvignon Blanc

As one of the world's noble wine grapes, there's a lot to discover about [Sauvignon Blanc](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/sauvignon-blanc-57815) [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/sauvignon-blanc-57815], from the variety's key regions—including [California](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/upward-trajectory-) [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/upward-trajectory-]

california-sauvignon-blanc-wine-focus-053123] and New Zealand [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/eyes-on-the-prize-new-zealand-wines-tasting-report-103123] , as well as France's Loire Valley [https://www.winespectator.com/vintage-charts/region/loire] and Bordeaux [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/bordeaux-wine-stands-firm-033123] —to its newer star figures (the McBride sisters [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/wines-dynamo-sister-team] or Sarah Jessica Parker [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/sarah-jessica-parker-ny-wine-experience-2023] , for instance). That's not to mention the many plates that pair deliciously with these food-friendly white wines, including goat cheese [https://www.winespectator.com/video/play/id/kA34eXQV/title/classic-wine-cheese-pairings-chevre-and-sauvignon-blanc] , cod [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/8-and-20-recipe-cod-en-papillote-with-sauvignon-blanc] and white asparagus [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/white-asparagus-with-sauvignon-blanc-57760] . Indeed, wine lovers are enjoyng a growing range of delectable Sauvignon Blancs, and the grape's popularity is surging [https://www.winespectator.com/articles/is-white-wine-enjoying-a-sales-boom-or-just-sauvignon-blanc] . So it's a great time to begin (or continue) a journey through these white wines; start with new scores and tasting notes for recently rated Sauvignon Blancs! [https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search?submitted=Y&page=1&winery=&text\_search\_flag=everything&search\_by=all&scorelow=85&scorehigh=-1&pricelo