

WineDiscovery

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Twelve delicious white wines from nine varieties

by **Tim Appelt**



"... three Sauvignon Blancs, two Chardonnays, Marsanne, Cortese, Aligoté, Falanghina, Pinot Blanc, Riesling and Viognier ..."

available in Ontario from June 9, 2018

Here we go again! So much variety, character and diversity — and so much great value. Yes, I'd say that every single recommended wine is a great value, that is, with great quality relative to price. And as is often the case with white wines, the prices themselves are compelling: eight of twelve are less than \$20.00, two more are less than \$22.00, and the final two are under \$30.00.

The clear star of the white wines of this release is the 2016 Hidden Bench Fumé Blanc from their Rosomel Vineyard. It's a wine that I've enjoyed over the years, and I think that this is the best vintage I've tasted. This is followed by an excellent Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, a repeat of the 2015 Mahi Sauvignon Blanc, and then an intriguing Sauvignon Blanc blend from Argentina, Susana Balbo's 2016 Signature White Blend.

Then the fun begins: a Marsanne from Australia's Tahbilk winery, a Gavi from Marchesi di Barolo, and a Bourgogne Aligoté. Then two Canadian Chardonnays from the Okanagan and Niagara, a Falanghina from Campania, a Pinot Blanc from Alto Adige, a Niagara Riesling, and a modern and stylish Viognier from the Pays d'Oc. Enjoy!



**HIDDEN BENCH FUMÉ BLANC 2016,
Rosomel Vineyard, VQA Beamsville
Bench, Niagara Escarpment**

**Vintages #68825 • \$29.95 • 750ml. • WD Score
93/100**

In my books, this is the most complex and compelling version of Hidden Bench's Fumé Blanc to date. Nuanced lemon and white flower aromas are framed by subtle notes of oak resin. Firm, crisp acids drive the palate, bring the lemon, apple and melon fruit forward, and help tuck the muted wood notes well underneath — barrel aging to great effect, adding a depth and allowing for a subtle layering of the palate, without generating much specific flavour. The finish lingers with a stony-lemony essence. A truly excellent wine.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **MARK ANTHONY WINE & SPIRITS**



MAHI SAUVIGNON BLANC 2015, Marlborough, South Island

Vintages #63941 • \$20.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 90/100

The nose is restrained, with a subtle stony, flinty character that all but hides a lemony, herbal core. Then the palate explodes with vivid acidity — nuanced white grapefruit at the centre, edged by green herbs, carried on a bed of wet stone. Very focused, a more reductive, mineral-driven style from Marlborough that we are seeing much more frequently here in Ontario. The Sauvignon Blanc is supplemented by a small (unspecified) amount of Semillon, with a 10% portion fermented in older oak, and 13% fermented with native yeasts. Quite compelling.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **CORK AND CROWN**

SUSANA BALBO SIGNATURE WHITE BLEND 2016, Uco Valley, Mendoza

Vintages #558734 • \$19.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 89/100

This is an intriguing wine: herbal and fresh mint notes off the top, with a lemony and white grapefruit centre and a hint of florality. It's rather Sauvignon-like, and that's 34% of the cuvée, and perhaps the subtle



florality comes from the just-ripe Torrontés (33%). The balance is Semillon. Bright acidity and modest alcohol frame the fresh and tangy palate, with the white grapefruit notes coming to the fore, pleasant complexity from the herbal undertones, and a subtle depth that suggests some time in wood. It's just-ripe character hides its Argentinian origins, but the wine reflects a growing trend with warmer climate whites: picking early to maintain acidity, and happily accepting the less-ripe character of the grape flavours. An int

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **BARRIQUE WINE IMPORTS LTD.**



TAHBILK MARSANNE 2017, Nagambie Lakes, Central Victoria

Vintages #117945 • \$17.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 90/100

The finely etched and compact nose displays delicate floral, herbal, lemon and peach aromas. Bright acidity

and modest alcohol are complemented by a lightly creamy texture, yet the palate remains lean and focused, and picks up a stony, flinty undertone on the finish. Totally delicious now, the wine has the ability to age gracefully and gain complexity for many years. A particularly fine value.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **GRAPE EXPECTATIONS WINE AGENCY**



MARCHESI DI BAROLO GAVI DI GAVI

DOCG 2016

Vintages #155382 • \$21.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 89/100

A refined and stylish Gavi. Bright aromas suggest red

apple, pear and melon fruit. The palate is crisp and fresh, yet the fruit takes on a softening ripeness, adding some white peach complexity, before the lengthy,

stony-mineral finish. Compact, elegant and very appealing.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **MAJESTIC WINE CELLARS**



CLOSERIE DES ALISIERS

BOURGOGNE ALIGOTÉ AC 2016

Vintages #557728 • \$19.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 89/100

This is an appealing Aligoté from Stéphane Brocard. Attractive aromas of green apple and lemon-lime fruit are backed by a firm, wet-stone undertone. A light, creamy weight is balanced by crisp acidity: rather straightforward and linear, but with a pleasant depth, and a lengthy, lemon-infused finish. Nicely priced, and a very good alternative to regional white Burgundy.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **CONNEXION OENOPHILIA**



BLUE MOUNTAIN CHARDONNAY 2016, BC VQA Okanagan Valley

**Vintages #350108 • \$28.95 • 750ml. • WD Score
89/100**

Smoky, oak-resin and toast notes off the top, but they don't overwhelm the nose, as pleasant lemon and apple notes emerge. The palate brightens as the acidity kicks in, tightening and focusing the fruit, and pushing back against the oaky frame, allowing some hidden stony minerality to emerge. Ripe and oaky, saved by the firm acidity — a fine representative of the Okanagan.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **ROGERS & COMPANY**

THIRTY BENCH WINEMAKER'S BLEND

CHARDONNAY 2016, VQA Niagara

Peninsula



Vintages #547877 • \$19.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 89/100

The Winemaker's Blend label from Thirty Bench is a systematic expansion of the brand beyond the estate fruit. So far, I think they've managed to maintain a lightness and elegance that fits with their ethos, so the

wines are very much worth exploring. This Chardonnay presents pleasant but restrained aromas of lemon and yellow apple fruit, dried herbs, with a little oaky resin underneath. Crisp acids balance the light, creamy texture, that adds breadth to the crisp palate. There is a little oaky sweetness on the finish, firmed by the lingering acidity. A very good value.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **ANDREW PELLER LIMITED**

JANARE SENETE FALANGHINA DEL

SANNIO DOP 2016



Vintages #556787 • \$18.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 88/100

The simple charms of Falanghina are on full display here. Pleasantly floral and lemony on the nose, then ripe red apple and melon fruit add interest to the palate, framed by the firm acidity but softened by a subtle, creamy weight. It's understated, elegant and very drinkable. Excellent value.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **THE VINE AGENCY**

ALOIS LAGEDER PINOT BIANCO 2016, DOC Südtirol - Alto Adige



Vintages #907691 • \$19.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 88/100

This attractive Pinot Blanc is from the excellent producer Alois Lageder. Dry, crisply acidic and nicely focused, you will find fresh green apple and lemon fruit aromas that are graced by notes of white flowers and apple blossoms, with a sprinkling of green herbs. A pleasant, lively wine.

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **VINEXX**

TAWSE SKETCHES OF NIAGARA RIESLING 2016, VQA Niagara Peninsula



Vintages #89029 • \$18.95 • 750ml. • WD Score 88/100

This is one of the consistent exemplars of what I call the sweet-tart style of Niagara Riesling. On the nose, a hint of Riesling stoniness underlies bright red apple, lemon-lime and white flower aromas. It is off-dry to medium-dry, but the vivid Niagara acidity keeps the palate crisp and fresh, as the fruit explodes on the zesty palate, and then the lingering acidity dries and focuses the finish. So attractive and quaffable!

Tasted June 5, 2017 • **TAWSE WINERY INC.**



GÉRARD BERTRAND RÉSERVE

SPÉCIALE VIOGNIER 2015, IGP Pays d'Oc

**Vintages #147975 • \$14.95 • 750ml. • WD Score
88/100**

This is a very good example of what's happening with white wines from the Languedoc. It is obviously picked just-ripe, keeping potential alcohol low (12.5% declared and quite dry), and while there is a little of the floral and stone fruit elements that typify Viognier, the wine is so very crisp and fresh that it's rather difficult to identify the variety. Yet the overall effect is quite charming, light and elegant. A very good value. Tasted June 5, 2017 • **FAMILY WINE MERCHANTS INC.**