

Wine & Spirits

Year's Best Chardonnay

94 | 2010 Hanzell Vineyards Chardonnay

After his travels to Europe to implement the Marshall Plan, and later as Ambassador to Italy, James Zellerbach's interest in Burgundy led him to plant chardonnay and pinot noir in the hills above Sonoma in 1953. The vineyard, now expanded to 44 acres, rises from 430 to 820 feet. It still includes that original planting (six percent of this blend) and the current team, led by Bob Sessions and Michael McNeill, still hold to the idea that chardonnay should be elegant and savory, an expression of its site (the average age of the vines is 32 years). This vintage is tight and stony, with oak firming up the plump and gentle curves of peach-like fruit. Air brings up a chamomile flower scent that lasts, the finish clean and delicate. For the cellar.

Hanzell Vineyards, Sonoma, CA

92 | 2011 Hanzell 'Sebella' Chardonnay

When this chardonnay is first poured, it's as tart as a fresh green apple and as pithy as biting into grapefruit rind. That citrus acidity mellows with air, and the wine becomes juicier as the fruit becomes more fragrant. Sebella is made from younger estate vines, fermented in stainless steel and aged in older barrels. A chardonnay with structural integrity, this will play off the freshness of any simply prepared fish.

Hanzell Vineyards, Sonoma, CA