

Sauvignon Blanc Style Camps

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Flashy or sublime, Sauvignon Blanc is on the climb

It's Spring and the '08 sauvignon blanc releases are making their way in to the world. Styles of quality sauvignon blanc run the gamut from stony to keenly pungent and the wealth of expression winegrowers coax from this variety indigenous to the Loire and Bordeaux regions of France makes the category broader than most. With an almost transparent effect, sauvignon blanc takes its cue directly from the soil resulting in different expressions from across any region. Given the various styles that can exist within a growing region lumping sauvignon blancs together by geography alone oversimplifies the category.

Different Camps

While complex, ultra premium examples and artful blends can exhibit many of the characteristics that are associated with the variety, the vast majority of sauvignon blancs under \$25 can be grouped in to broad 'style camps' based on the dominant flavors in their taste profile. Wines above \$25 tend to show greater concentration and complexity making them harder to pigeonhole but oak aging is one factor that sets them apart.

Common Ground

Acidity is the cornerstone of quality sauvignon blanc; a common thread that runs through every style and gives the wine its characteristic freshness. Winemaking techniques also play an important role in a sauvignon blanc's ultimate expression and price tag. The use of oak in California fume-style wines and the barrel aging common in Bordeaux were originally adapted to soften flavors by masking aggressive herbaceous qualities that result from over-cropped fruit. With yields held in check, winemakers ferment in stainless steel to sharpen intensity and focus the variety's most desirable flavors.

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Mineral- Flinty, smoky, wet stone

Fruit -All citrus fruits, tree fruits (stone fruit, figs), melons and tropical fruits, pineapple, guava, and passion fruit

Angove Adelaide Hills Vineyard Select Sauvignon Blanc, Australia SRP \$16

Chalky, porous soils at 1,500 feet on Adelaide's Mt. Lofty produce ripe tropical fruit flavors, minerality and a persistent finish.



Woollaston Nelson Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand SRP \$15 Stony, free-draining alluvial soils over deep, compacted gravel at Woollaston's Waimea vineyard adds ripe melon and tropical fruit notes to their Sauvignon Blanc.

Floral Honeysuckle, elderflower, white flowers

Grassy/Pungent- Pronounced flavors of fresh herbs, lemongrass, gooseberry, asparagus, capsicum, green olive, nettle and hay

Long Boat, Marlborough, New Zealand SRP \$16 Clay-loam and sand at high-elevation sites in the Awatere and Waihopai Valleys combined with low yields produce intense and complex flavors of gooseberry, green apple and grass.

Oak- Smoke, toast, spice, vanilla, licorice, caramel (typically only found in wines over \$25)