

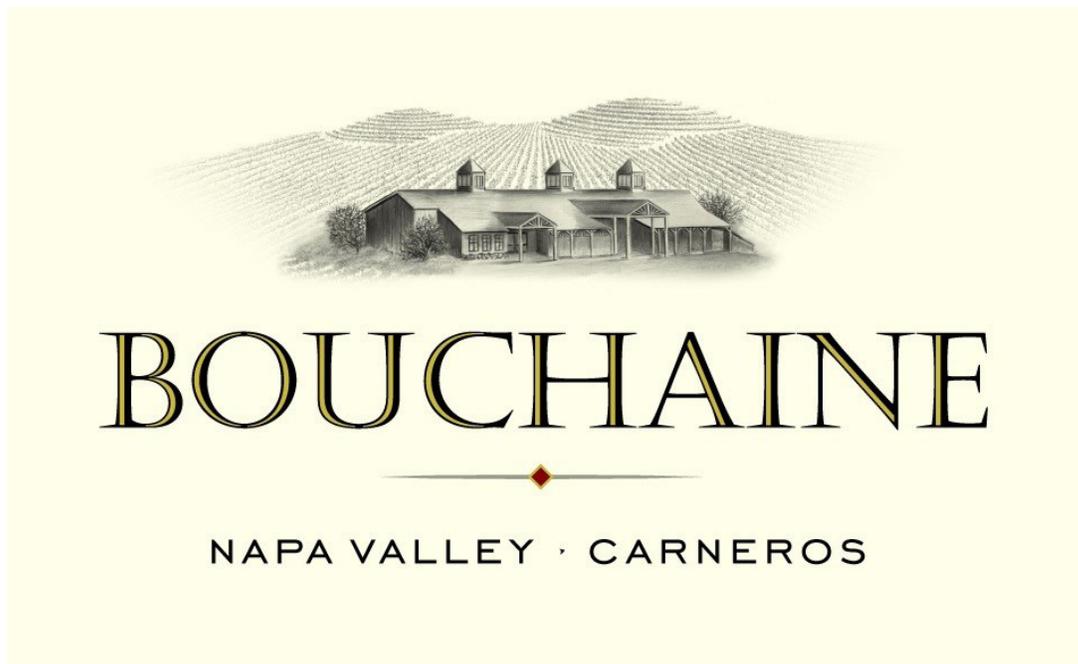
# PAPER CITY.

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## The Perfect Afternoon Chardonnay

A \$30 Wine Find that Does the White Grape Justice

BY JAMES BROCK, JUNE 1, 2017



*Here's a Chardonnay that might please everyone.*

Let's talk Chardonnay. You know, the most widely planted white wine grape in the world. The wine that (usually) takes up the most space on supermarket shelves. The variety that, by necessity, must be represented on every restaurant menu.

I imagine you've had your fair share of Chardonnay, and likely have developed your own preferred taste profile for it. Some like lots of malolactic fermentation and the "buttery" taste that results, while others go for something unoaked and more citrus-forward. (I prefer the latter, but have had some very good examples of the former.)

A few days ago, I opened a Chardonnay from the former category, the 2014 Estate Chardonnay from Bouchaine, and my tasting companions and I have added it to our inventory. It was perfect for the afternoon, paired with a selection of cheeses and grapes. What struck me the most about it was its finish: crisp, yet full, rich and balanced.

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There's a lot going on in this Chardonnay from the Carneros District. It's 90 percent barrel fermented (15 percent new oak, Hungarian and French), and 10 percent stainless steel. The barrels carried varying toast levels, and different strains of yeast and malolactic bacteria were used; all were blended. The result is a wine with an upfront nose of apple and (delicately) toasted nuts — think walnuts or almonds.

The Estate Chardonnay comes from 35-year-old vines and Dijon plantings dating to 1996, and more than a dozen blocks; 6,783 cases were produced, and the alcohol is at 13.9 percent.

Bouchaine is one of the oldest Carneros wineries, and the winemaker, Chris Kajani, who was hired in 2015 by owners Gerret and Tatiana Copeland, has crafted a very drinkable Chardonnay. Pair this with cheese, grilled fish or shrimp, or crab cakes, and expect to pay around \$30.



*On the palate, you get some pear and lemon, and the oak is certainly present, which many of you will like (and for those of you who shy away from that, give this a try... I think you will be pleased; it's not overbearingly toasted).*

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