

## Carneros Highway



The stretch of Highway 12 running through Carneros was renamed to honor the region. Vineyard signs stand out as emblems of the pride taken by Carneros Quality Alliance members.



Wines were blind-tasted at a Carneros Quality Alliance tasting by Dan Berger. Based on discussions with him, the editors translated his rankings into numerical ranges on *Wine Enthusiast's* 100-point scale.

### Sparkling Wine

*Exceptional (95+ points)*

**Gloria Ferrer Blanc de Noirs.** Amazingly fresh, fragrant aroma of strawberries and raspberries. Very slight sweetness, perfect balance. (\$15)

*Superior (92-94)*

**Domaine Chandon Blanc de Noirs Cuvée 391.** Faint yeast, cherry and broad fruit; rich and delightful. Try it with salmon. (\$14)

**Codorníu Napa Rosé.** Strawberry shortcake aroma, from Pinot fruit with over two years on the yeast to give it roundness. Gentle balanced acidity makes it lovely with food. (*Winery only*)

*Very Highly Recommended (89-91)*

**1988 Gloria Ferrer Carneros Cuvée, Late Disgorged.** Mature yeast with hint of Pinot, lemon peel and fruit. Perfect for Asian cuisine. (\$25)

**1992 Domaine Carneros Brut.** Cracker barrel note with firm citrus and apple aromas. Classy entry and crisp taste without any bite. (\$18)

*Highly Recommended (86-88)*

**1991 Domaine Carneros Blanc de Blancs.** Bright fruit of citrus with a trace of vanilla and grapefruit finish. Hint of toast as well. (\$24)

### Chardonnay

*Exceptional (95+ points)*

**1995 Acacia.** Stunning aroma of ruby red grapefruit, floral notes with an almost Muscatty/spicy tone. Proves that delicate yet rich Chardonnay can be made here. Truly great. (\$18.50)

**1994 Bouchaine.** Just slightly broader than the Acacia, with more spice, tropical fruit (pineapple mainly) and complexity. (\$17.50)

*Superior (92-94)*

**1994 Beaulieu Reserve.** More oak than the prior wines, and a bit extractive, but attractive vanilla/char and soft entry. A wine for those who prefer a bit more oak. (\$20)

**1995 Saintsbury.** Stylish wine with lovely spice, delicate apple and pear, trace of pineapple and other tropical fruits. Try it with grilled seafood. (\$17)

*Very Highly Recommended (89-91)*

**1994 Buena Vista.** Lighter-styled wine, built on tropical fruit and apple flavors. Mild oak, faint oaky finish. Made for food. (\$14)

**1994 Gloria Ferrer.** Slightly oily, oaky wine with intriguing nutmeg or clove spice; rich entry, full fruit and lingering aftertaste. (\$16)

*Highly Recommended (86-88)*

**1994 St. Clement.** Citrus, apple and spice, but the wine isn't as fresh and crisp as past vintages. (\$18)

**1995 MacRostie.** Broad, rich aroma of oak, malolactic and vanilla custard notes; rich, almost sweet entry. (\$16.50)

### Pinot Noir

*Exceptional (95+ points)*

**1995 Acacia.** Deep, dark, brooding fruit loaded with black cherry, spice and oak. Potent and potentially great. A bargain compared with the \$40 and up prices on so many Pinot Noirs these days. (\$18.50)

**1995 Saintsbury.** Lighter weight wine with dense fruit of violets, roses, red cherries and a kiss of oak. A stunningly fine wine. (\$18)

**1995 Carneros Creek, Signature Reserve.** Very young, so hard to judge, but loads of deeply wrought fruit with chocolate finish. Finely made, a wine for the cellar. (\$35)

**1994 Acacia Reserve.** Spice such as clove and sandalwood, oak and dense fruit. A hefty but not over-ripe wine. (\$25)

**1994 Saintsbury Reserve.** Smoke, toast, black cherry, raspberry and even a hint of citrus, with traces of roses and anise. A wine to wow your local snob or lay down. (\$35)

**1994 Etude.** Cherry, sandalwood and strawberries in a wine of pure grace. Ripe, full, but not in any way overdone. Perfect harmonies of scale, and one of the classiest wines on the table. (\$28)

*Superior (92-94)*

**1994 Domaine Carneros.** Slightly green peppery in aroma, but with fine Burgundian cherry, earth and spice. Black cherry taste, slightly jammy finish. Really fun to drink now or soon. (\$20)

**1994 Buena Vista.** Lighter wine with lovely forward fruit or strawberry and cherry, not as complex. (\$12)

**1994 Mondavi Carneros.** Elegant and deeply scented wine with hints of thyme, anise, fresh tomato and jam. Showing bit more tannin than it needs. (\$26)

### Merlot

*Exceptional (95+ points)*

**1994 Truchard.** Green tea and cherry aroma; aeration reveals clove, cinnamon, black cherry spice and hint of fresh jam. Mouthfilling and rewarding, needs a year or three to flesh out. (\$22)

**1994 Havens Reserve.** Oak, Violets, black cherry fruit and very ripe flavors. Tannic and a bit coarse, but potentially sensational. Needs three years to round up. (\$28)

*Superior (92-94)*

**1994 MacRostie.** Terrific aroma of toast/chocolate, cedar, cranberry, hint of plum jam, with a generous, soft entry, tannic finish and altogether engaging Merlot-ishness. Needs a couple of years to expand. (\$23)

*Very Highly Recommended (89-91)*

**1994 Buena Vista Carneros.** Hint of citrus with tea, olive, chocolate, pomegranate and blueberry notes. Quite tart, and works brilliantly with grilled salmon. Perhaps the best pure Merlot on the table, but not as showy or as cellar-worthy (nor as oaky) as the prior three wines. Ideal for drinking over the next year or two. (\$14)