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Truchard Vineyards 2006 Chardonnay

Wine of the Week

By Paul Lukacs

For many wine drinkers, California chardonnay carries the reputation of being somewhat uncouth — a heavy, cumbersome sort of wine, lacking in finesse or grace. Although many California chardonnays fit that profile, plenty do not.

Truchard's 2006, from the cool Carneros region at the southern edge of Napa Valley, is a fine example of a wine that tastes rich but also refined. It displays a sophisticated sense of style.

More than many varietals, chardonnay displays its geographic origins, especially the climatic ones. If the grapes are grown in a hot, sun-drenched locale, the wine invariably will feel heavy and taste full. If they grow in a cool region, the wine will taste crisper and feel lighter.

Temperatures in Carneros can get high on summer afternoons, but the mornings there invariably dawn cool and foggy. The result can be wines with full flavor but a nimble body, wines that prove satisfying and refreshing all at once.

This particular chardonnay offers ripe fruit flavors (green apple, pear and lemon) enhanced by hints of vanilla and spice from oak aging. It is well-balanced and harmonious; no element seems out of place, and that sense of harmony is what gives the wine so much charm. Try it with rich poultry or seafood dishes. It would be perfect with crab cakes.

