

# On The Homefront

Each week a different business-person, artisan or professional who lives or works in Lansing will share some aspect about his or her occupation that may be useful to Lansing residents.

## Quality Chardonnay for \$10 or Less

By **Chris Bangs & Gordon Hill**, Triphammer Liquors  
 With over 100 varieties of grapes being used to produce wine at thousands of wineries, choices can get a bit daunting. While a flood of books and magazines attempts to demystify wine, many folks remain overwhelmed. In all of this, some esteemed wine critics and writers have forgotten what it's all about. Wine should be enjoyed. Exciting and fun, wine can accentuate a gourmet dinner or add life to a bowl of spaghetti.

By now, you probably recognize the names Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Riesling. These are the grape varieties that have become popular in recent times. We've chosen Chardonnay as our focus. Chardonnay is a first-class white wine grape. It's the prominent white grape of France's Burgundy region and is widely planted in the USA, Australia, and South America. It's generally easy to grow and lends itself well to a number of winemaking styles. From our experiences, Chardonnay pairs well with white meat dishes and most seafood (a good buttery Chardonnay and Chicken Scampi is one of our favorites).

Consumer demand for Chardonnay is at its peak. Unfortunately, the demand has also yielded an array of wines which are frequently mediocre and generally overpriced. Those of us on limited budgets find it increasingly more difficult to search through the bins of Chardonnay to find a reasonably priced high quality bottle.

The bottom-line is — there are good wines out there. We'd like to save you some of the searching and point out several wines that represent value, quality, and solid varietal character. In our search, we tasted wines (perhaps more than we'd care to admit) from California, New York, Chile, France, and Australia. Included below are our picks. [All wines were tasted blind to avoid label discrimination. Prices quoted may vary in the Central New York area.]

Hahn Estates Monterey, 1995 (CA)

(10) - Beginning and finishing with toasty oak, with a nice core of ripe pear, this wine was favorably received by all who tasted it.

**Villa Mt. Eden, 1995 (CA)** - (\$10) - This wine packs in a lot of flavor with distinct tropical fruit nuances and a dose of warm oak on the finish.

**Rosemount Estate, 1996 (So. Australia)** - (\$9) - As usual, this latest offering from a consistent Aussie winery is appealing with its peach and apricot flavors and smooth lingering finish.

**Trio (by Concha y Toro) Casablanca Valley 1995 (Chile)** - (\$8) - With an attractive nose of tangerines and apricots, this is an effusively fruit driven white that grabs your attention right away.

**Round Hill, 1995 (CA)** - (\$7) - We were impressed by the price and quality of this crisp, zippy white that has a lot to offer over its competitors in the same price range.

While our selections represent just a fraction of available Chardonnays, we feel they represent good values. The absence of New York or French listings doesn't mean these regions can't produce good value-priced wines, but they're all more than \$10.

New York State offers many solid selections, including Lamoreaux Landing (\$12), Treleaven (\$12), Wiemer (\$12), and Fox Run (\$11). We found the 1995 Lamoreaux Landing noteworthy, with its juicy mouthfeel and smooth, buttery, toasty finish. For those of you looking for an offering from France's Burgundy region, the 1995 Macon-Lugny "Les Charmes" (\$9), with its green apple and mineral components, was quite pleasant.

We realize that everyone has different tastes and that taste in wine is very subjective. If you're interested in the world of wine, experiment and explore. If one style, variety, producer, or region does not suit your taste, don't give up. There are many knowledgeable, friendly people at your local wine merchants who will be happy to help you.

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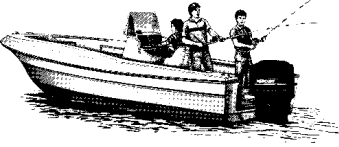
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