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WINE

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RECOMMENDS *By Jon Bonné*

Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc

What's been true for a while about Sauvignon Blanc continues to hold: If you take it seriously — but not pretentiously, oh ye oak meisters — you can make a very good wine, especially out of Napa Valley grapes. These are, or should be, wines that bask in the potential for ripe fruit.

The problem might be whether that fruit is being grown in too large a crop to make interesting wine. Our tasting revealed too many wines without concentrated flavors. Sauvignon Blanc has always been a young-drinking workhorse, but that's no reason not to spend time and effort to get great fruit, especially in a standout vintage like 2009.

It seemed pricing around \$20 was a sweet spot, enough to ensure that the wine is being taken seriously. Even if it's opened on a carefree summer evening, there's no reason for Sauvignon Blanc not to be made with serious intent.

Jon Bonné is The Chronicle's wine editor. Find him at jbonne@sfchronicle.com or twitter.com/jbonne.



2009 Cliff Lede Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$22):

A complex mix of winemaking techniques (steel, barrel and concrete egg) and the use of some Sauvignon Musque yielded a layered, serious wine, with fern-like freshness on the nose, plus freesia, layers of apricot, lime and hay. It's a bit quiet right now, but should get more expressive through the summer.

XNIP code: G3HXF

