



# OUR BEST NEW WHITE

Grenache Blanc comes alive in the West. *By Sara Schneider*

**TRADITION, IN THE WINE WORLD,** is generally considered a wonderful thing. We have exquisite bottles of Bordeaux and Burgundy because winemakers in those regions figured out centuries ago what worked well, and kept doing it. Occasionally, though, a *lack* of tradition is a stroke of luck.

Take my newest favorite white, for instance: Grenache Blanc. In France's Rhône Valley, the variety has been a key player for a very long time, but generally behind the scenes, used in blends to shore up weaknesses in more prominent white grapes like Viognier, Roussanne, and Marsanne.

Enter experimental New World producers, though, and a few hundred acres of Grenache Blanc vines planted on the West Coast. Here, winemakers discovered that Grenache Blanc stands out: It seems to retain a more vibrant level of acidity than

in the Rhône Valley, due possibly to more extreme day-to-night temperature shifts. And that brightness, balancing the wine's fatness, creates a satisfying white all on its own—perfect for summer sipping.

Don't sell it short as a food wine either. Just ask winemaker Susan Tipton of California's Lodi region; she founded an audacious all-white (and pink) winery in the middle of big-red territory. (Her 2013 Acquiesce Grenache Blanc won Best in Class in the *Sunset* International Wine Competition last year.) Her recommendations (delicious—we tried them): sushi, fish with fennel, shrimp scampi, spicy Asian chicken, aioli... With fish tacos, amazing. The winning partner: grilled peach and arugula salad with prosciutto. The salty-sweet meat is an ideal flavor and texture match for the bright, mineral wine. Find the recipe at [sunset.com/peachsalad](http://sunset.com/peachsalad).

## Ones to taste

Most of the West's Grenache Blanc vineyards are clustered on California's Central Coast—interestingly, across a swath of climates, from warm Paso Robles to cooler Edna Valley to varied Santa Barbara County. Look also for some lovely versions from Washington and one from Oregon.

**Acquiesce 2014 (Lodi; \$24).** Hints of jasmine over apple, pear, and nectarine with a touch of pithy walnut skin and river-rock minerality.

**Burbank Ranch 2013 "Summertime" (Paso Robles; \$27).** Crisp but creamy and mouth-filling, with a juicy gamut of citrus, fuzzy peach, and fresh minerals.

**Dobbes Family 2013 Crater View Vineyard (Rogue Valley; \$26).** Crisp apples wrapped in herbal aromas and limestone.

**Jaffurs 2014 Thompson Vineyard (Santa Barbara County; \$27).** Racy lime softened by peach, honeysuckle, and almond.

**Kinero 2013 "Alice" (Paso Robles; \$22).** Savory herbs and nutty aromas add complexity to fresh peach and green apple.

**Margerum 2014 (Santa Barbara County; \$21).** Lime zest spikes refreshing white peach and apricot, with nice weight on the palate and flint on the end.

**Rulo 2013 Boushey Vineyard (Yakima Valley; \$25).** A tart citrus core padded with delicate peach, apple, and jasmine, followed by a bright, mineral finish.

**Shane 2014 Camp 4 Vineyard (Santa Ynez Valley; \$24).** Fresh and lovely—orange peel and herbs around a core of nectarine, hints of jasmine, and wet stones.

**Tablas Creek 2013 (Paso Robles; \$27).** A beautiful gamut of citrus with hints of stone fruit, orange blossom, fresh herbs, and almond peel.

**Tangent 2013 (Edna Valley; \$17).** Delightful apple, peach, almond, and honeysuckle notes give way to bright grapefruit and racy limestone. ▾



*Sara tweets! Follow wine editor Sara Schneider for tasting tips, wine picks, and news: @SaraAtSunset.*