

# best wines \$20 and under

## whites

### sauvignon blanc

#### 2006 WESTERLY VINEYARDS (\$19)

California's Santa Ynez Valley is no longer a secret, though Happy Canyon, on its southern perimeter, is still pretty unknown. Thanks to warm days and cool nights, it's the perfect place to produce wines like this delightfully vibrant Sauvignon, packed with lively melon and grapefruit flavors.

### chardonnay

#### 2006 CHEHALEM INOX (\$19)

This unoaked, steel tank-fermented Chardonnay (*inox* is short for "steel" in French), from winemaker Harry Peterson-Nedry, showcases Oregon's cool-climate fruit; it has a palate-pleasing leanness that brings those juicy peach, apple and tropical-melon flavors to the fore. Unhindered by oak, it's all pure Chardonnay.

## reds

### pinot noir

#### 2005 AU BON CLIMAT SANTA BARBARA COUNTY (\$20)

This label has long been star winemaker Jim Clendenen's entry-level Pinot Noir, and his 2005 is likely to be the best yet—an elegant, medium-bodied, European-style wine.

### merlot

#### 2004 PRAXIS (\$15)

After stints at California wineries such as Jarvis and Lyeth, vintner Bill Arbios established his own Arbios label in Sonoma—and later a value line, Praxis. Broad and supple, this Merlot from the Alexander Valley highlights the region's famously flamboyant fruit flavors.

### cabernet sauvignon

#### 2004 EDGE (\$20)

It's tough to find any Napa Cabernet for \$20 these days, much less one

this stylish. Ray Signorello, Jr., made this full-bodied, lightly oaked wine from grapes purchased all over Napa Valley, including Stags Leap.

### zinfandel

#### 2005 JOEL GOTT CALIFORNIA (\$17)

Fifth-generation vintner Joel Gott knows how to supply plenty of bang for the buck. He scoured Napa, Sonoma, Amador and Lodi for the mostly old-vine fruit that went into this sophisticated yet juicy Zin.

### syrah

#### 2005 ANDREW MURRAY VINEYARDS TOUS LES JOURS (\$16)

Andrew Murray gave this Syrah the serious treatment generally reserved for a producer's best wines (limited yields, hand-harvesting). The rewards are clear in this concentrated red, made with grapes sourced from Santa Barbara and Paso Robles.



## wine importer of the year

# KERMIT LYNCH

"If I had to do it over again, maybe I wouldn't have written a book telling my competitors how I did it," comments Kermit Lynch about *Adventures on the Wine Route*, which he published in 1988. In the book, as in life, Lynch celebrated once-obscure but now-famous winemakers like Gérard Chave in the Rhône and extolled grower-winemakers over big firms and *négociants*. Nearly 20 years later, Lynch is still making discoveries all

over France. His latest: a lively, well-priced sparkling Clairette de Die from the Rhône and the wines of Domaine Comtesse Bernard de Cherisey in Burgundy: "I couldn't believe I hadn't heard of them." For Lynch, the adventures continue.

*french wine scout*  
Kermit Lynch makes stellar discoveries in the Rhône Valley and all over France.