



# The Queen of Bordeaux

Bordeaux, world renowned for its legendary reds, also produces stellar white wines. Sauvignon Blanc is known in many forms, from herbaceous *Fumes* to pricey dessert *Sauternes*. It runs the gamut of flavors from bell pepper to citrus to tropical fruity and may be the most flexible varietal around because it also makes an amazing sparkling wine.

Want to sound like a real wine snob? Here's a fun fact: In a wild twist of nature back in the 1600s, Sauvignon Blanc got knocked up by Cabernet Franc - producing Cabernet Sauvignon!

Sauvignon Blanc wines can present many aromas and flavors, depending on the region, soil, age of the vines, whether oak is used and of course the winemaker. In southern California appellations, Sauvignon Blanc wines often feature fruity characteristics resulting in wines that pair well with chicken, pork, sushi, hummus and even spicy Thai food.

Traditional terms used to describe Sauvignon Blanc include grassy, herbaceous, bell pepper, grapefruit. My very first crush on wine began as a wine steward at the Ahwahnee Hotel when I discovered Napa Valley's *Newton Sauvignon Blanc*. It had all of the above and something else, a hint of peppercini.

Later, I ventured into Sonoma County and willingly fell into the embrace of *Chateau St. Jean's Fume Blanc La Petite Etoile*. A "Fume" Blanc is a Sauvignon Blanc - the term "fume" means smoked, but although many people believe it refers to wine aged in toasted barrels, in reality in France it refers to the morning fog that covers the Loire Valley that looks like smoke. Smoky aroma or flavor in any Sauvignon Blanc is a result of aging in toasted oak barrels. And the term "*Fume Blanc*" was just another of Robert Mondavi's brilliant marketing ideas!

It was early January 2007 at *Stuart Cellars* and Marshall pulled me into the lab, grabbing a beaker of some cloudy yellowish stuff. Knowing it was unfinned wine, I eagerly reached for it asking what it was but he wouldn't tell me - told me to guess, with this mischievous little gleam in his eye.

Wow!! The nose was super tropical, peachy with this undercoating of creaminess and my first thought was: Viognier. But wait, 2006 was a pretty hot summer. And Marshall has something up his sleeve. Let's taste it first before rendering judgment (always a wise move.) Definitely lush peaches, mango and kiwi but with a very distinctive grapefruit finish.

Sauvignon Blanc. I've been in love with Marshall's versions of this versatile grape ever since. To me it is the best wine - bar none - to have with a patio barbeque: grilled chicken with mango glaze and fresh veggies on the skewer! Shall we say the second weekend in March? Don't forget to bring the *Stuart 2010 Sauvignon Blanc*!