



# TRUMPETVINE WINES

in Trumpetvine Court

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## SAUVIGNON BLANC ...

It is no secret or mystery that prices for fine white wines are soaring. Worldwide demand, a "white wine boom" in this country, and the weakness of the dollar have contributed to skyrocketing prices. Wholesale costs of French white Burgundies have nearly doubled from the 1977 to 1978 vintages. Top-flight Napa Chardonnays from 1977—an uneven vintage at best—are appearing in the \$9–\$11 range. Indeed, any wine that can legally be called Chardonnay, regardless of quality, will cost at least \$5. These prices start at the bottom: Chardonnay, at \$1,200/ton for premium grapes, is the highest priced variety in the state. Although growers have begun to adjust to this demand by grafting or replanting to Chardonnay and other white varieties, this potential relief is several years away from being felt in the marketplace. And even then quality French and California Chardonnays will never be cheap, as the vine is shy-bearing and difficult to grow successfully.

Fortunately, there are alternatives for lovers of fine varietal white wines, one of the most attractive being

Sauvignon Blanc. The Sauvignon blanc grape comes from France, where it is an important component of the luscious, sweet Sauternes of Bordeaux. In that region, it also produces a distinctive dry wine, Graves. Further north, in the Loire valley, it produces more delicate wines, the most well known of which are Sancerre and Pouilly-Fume.

In California, Sauvignon blanc has been widely planted for many years. Until recently it was vinified into inexpensive California "Sauterne" and as such did not enjoy much of a reputation. In the late 1960s two factors combined to begin to change that. The first was technological: the advent of temperature-controlled fermentation, allowing the winemaker to keep fermenting juice cool, thereby retaining more fruitiness and freshness, and producing "cleaner" white wines. With this technique and the aging of these wines for a short while in oak barrels, high quality Sauvignon Blanc began to appear. But it took a bit of marketing prowess to popularize and sell it. In the late 1960s, Robert Mondavi Winery began labeling their cold-fermented, barrel aged Sauvignon Blanc as Fume

