

Weekend Wines: Chardonnays that come alive when artfully blended



Edward Deitch

By Edward Deitch, Vint-ed.com

Making exciting wine is often about creating a successful blend, and a large producer in Gascony, in southwest France, is doing just that by mixing chardonnay with other white varieties. I knew Domaine du Tariquet mainly for its tangy blend of ugni blanc and colombar, two of the region's more notable grapes. They are the pillars, in their distilled form, of Armagnac, a brandy that's Gascony's most famous libation.

But Tariquet's chardonnay blends, I discovered in tasting a set of new releases, bring the art of blending in this unheralded region (at least for still wines) to another level. The world's greatest chardonnays, of course, come from Burgundy, and the grape on its own is at best mediocre in much of the rest of France. But when combined by Domaine du Tariquet in two different blends, the wines become more than the sum of their parts.

The first is **Tariquet's 2010 Côté**, an unusual and winning blend of half chardonnay and half sauvignon blanc. The wine gives us the generosity and roundness of chardonnay and the herbaceousness and focus of sauvignon – a half-measure of each with tastes reminiscent of yellow delicious apples, lemon-lime, a touch of nutmeg and a little vanilla. It's not a terribly complicated wine, but it's ever so easy to drink, with alcohol at a mere 11 percent. Think of it for simple seafood and chicken dishes and as a refreshing aperitif. The suggested price is \$15.

The second wine, at \$11, is **Domaine du Tariquet's 2010 Chenin-Chardonnay**, a blend of 75 percent chenin blanc and 25 percent chardonnay. This one is round and elegant with tropical fruit notes, citrus, vanilla and a bit of ginger. Chenin blanc is one of the great varieties of the Loire Valley, but here, somewhat out of its element, it finds good compatibility with chardonnay. I enjoyed it on its own and can imagine it easily with sushi, Indian food and well-seasoned roast pork.

Domaine du Tariquet's wines are widely available and are worth seeking out for their interest and value. Imported by Robert Kacher Selections, Washington, D.C. *Wines received as press samples.*

Edward Deitch is a James Beard Award-winning wine critic. Find many more of his wine reviews and commentary on his blog, Vint-ed.com, and follow him on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/EdwardDeitch).