

## Names to Know in Napa

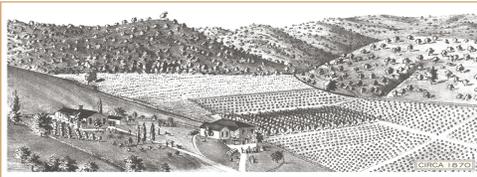
*Six exciting winemakers championing elegance*

White Rock Vineyards- Larkmead - Lang & Reed Wine Company - Ovid -  
Nichelini Family Winery - Detert family Vineyards

*In search of wines with a lighter touch, Adam Lechmere encounters a trendsetting breed of Napa winemaker. A diverse bunch, they are all following a path that favours restraining over opulence, and are all worth seeking out.*

...There is far more to Napa than unattainable cults, and winemakers who abandon restraint in the chase for 100-point scores. Napa has achieved fame because of its wonderful terroir, and all over the appellation there are those for whom the commercial imperative is trumped by other considerations... They are a diverse bunch; they work with Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, but also with varieties considered more obscure in Napa: Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petite Sirah, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel. But **they are united by a common belief, that overripeness and high alcohol obscure terroir...**

They instinctively pursue balance, and for that they may be considered anomalies in a region noted for excess. The wines are difficult to get hold of (in many cases there simply isn't enough wine to export), but they represent an ideal of Napa that was nearly lost. They are worth searching out.



WHITE ROCK  
VINEYARDS

### Christopher Vandendriessche- White Rock Vineyards

There's a pleasing harmony about White Rock's gateway being marked not by any name but a massive white rock. Tucked into the rolling hills between Stags Leap District and Atlas Peak, the Vandendriessche family's 14.5ha of Cabernet and Chardonnay are defined by the friable volcanic rock, poor in nutrients but water-retaining, that sits half a metre beneath the topsoil.

Christopher worked at Château Pape Clément in Bordeaux in the 1990s, and later under John Kongsgaard. He makes wines of extraordinary complexity and allure with very little fanfare. His attitude is non-interventionist though undogmatic. He uses inoculated yeast as he sees fit – **'There are a lot of ways to take risks; some increase quality, some don't'** – and controls malolactic fermentation on the Chardonnay (*'apart from a little bit to make it sexy'*). Like the vines themselves, he thrives on constraint: *'It almost doesn't ripen,'* he says with satisfaction, pointing to a strip of Merlot in the lee of the hill. Everything comes back to the rock. *'I try to do this and that, make the finish less tannic, fight the opulence, change maceration times, but I come to the conclusion that it all happens in the vineyard.'*

### One to try

**White Rock Vineyards, Chardonnay, Napa Valley 2014 - 95 POA The Winery**

A zesty, lime-scented nose and a beautifully weighted palate, the result of 11 months on lees. Dry, becoming exotic with melon and hints of peach, balanced by bright acidity. Luscious but restrained.

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