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Life & Style / Good Eating

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Offbeat grapes making their way in American vineyards

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A rallying cry some years back was a simple "ABC!" It stood for "Anything But Chardonnay" and was the response of many wine aficionados to the ubiquity of oaky, buttery chardonnay from California.

It may have helped sauvignon blanc sales, but it certainly goaded American winemakers to consider making different styles of chardonnay.

No need for any acronyms these days. Not only are there chardonnays of various stripes, but also both red and white wines are being made in our country from varieties of grapes usually seen only on vacation outside of it.

I rounded up a passel of them in Spain, Italy, Greece

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that got their start

WHITES

No disputing American whites from the Vinho Verde region of northern Portugal (where it is known as alvarinho). Now it's proving popular as a grape grown here. The 2012 Abacela Albarino Estate Southern Oregon (\$20) offers more stone fruit aromas and flavors than you'd get from the Iberian Peninsula. The **2012 Harney Lane Albarino Lodi** (\$20), benefits from 50/50 used oak/stainless steel fermentation and really coats the palate in plush texture.

A light, fresh albarino is the 2013 Vina Verde (\$16) with flavors of melon and green apple and

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REDS

The red grape that I've seen in California there's the hefty, dark, and very much resembling a Spanish Rioja. Sonoma County's **2011 McCay Cellars Carignane Lodi** (\$32) calls to mind old-vine carignan from southern France with its blood-meat and black cherry aromas. But it is also less extracted than many more rustic versions from France, and consequently more appealing.

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