



BY Tom Firth
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY Tieran Green



Goat cheese salad at Cassis with Alsatian pinot gris.

Winter Whites

The right white wines for cold nights, fuzzy slippers and roaring fires.

Whites you say? Surely I must be crazy to suggest such a thing once the weather dips below freezing. If it makes you feel better, we can call them fireside whites, or even “serious” white wines for serious wine drinkers. Regardless, you should be pulling some corks or cracking some caps on white wine this winter.

So, what sort of wines are suitable for a blustery, wintry day? Right off the bat, oaky chardonnays are a great choice. New world chardonnays from America, Australia or even Chile often have a richer, more prominent oak character than those from France or other European countries. Wines matured in smaller oak barrels or in first- or second-use barrels (the more often you reuse a barrel, the more the influence of oak on a wine

diminishes) add buttery, caramel or spicy flavours and aromas. Chardonnay is one of the few white grapes that is capable of having plenty of oak and still being balanced. These wines can also be aged *sur lie*, or “on the lees,” which are the dead yeast cells left over from fermentation that add an obviously yeasty character to the wine, and often a nutty or sourdough flavour and some richer texture to the wine as well.



**DOMAINE DURIEU 2013
CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE CUVÉE
TRADITIONNELLE BLANC,
RHÔNE, FRANCE**

Oh, this just hits the spot. Based around roussanne with grenache and clairette, the nose is clean and elegant. Even on the palate there is a certain refinement, with hints of lime, apple and minerals, and a long and textured finish. Pair with white meats if serving for dinner, or with a roaring fire and fuzzy slippers. \$49



**DOMAINE MUR-MUR-IUM 2013
VIOGNIER,
VENTOUX, FRANCE**

Close your eyes and have a sniff — you can easily picture a rolling vineyard around you while resting on a beautiful patio. Peaches and nectarines come to the fore with bold mineral character and a long, slightly bitter finish. Roasted chicken, a creamy sauce or a mild curry will work here. \$28



**CAVE SPRING 2013 ESTATE RIESLING,
BEAMSVILLE BENCH, ONTARIO**

We don't see nearly enough Ontario riesling here in Alberta, but the folks at Cave Springs know how to make one that stands out, and it's readily available here. Lime fruits and intense mineral tones start things off, while racy acids and a pinch of sweetness on the finish bring you back for another. So good. \$24



**WENTE VINEYARDS 2012
RIVA RANCH CHARDONNAY,
ARROYO SECO,
MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

Like those chardonnays big and oaky? Here you go! Spicy barrel characters with vanilla bean and fresh buttery notes are balanced by rich fruits, a touch of caramel and a slightly boozy finish. \$23



**PATZ & HALL 2013 CHARDONNAY,
SONOMA COAST, CALIFORNIA**

Think creamy pear and peach aromas with a bit of spice. Flavours are deep, layered and range from freshly sliced pears and peeled apples with a hint of butter and some zingy acids. A delicious and versatile match against poultry or salmon with a creamy sauce. \$44



**TINHORN CREEK 2014 OLDFIELD
SERIES 2 BENCH WHITE,
OKANAGAN VALLEY, B.C.**

A blend of semillon, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, viognier and muscat, this is a well-thought-out combination that shows off what is happening with Okanagan whites. A lot of tropical fruits can be found in the glass with a fine balance between fruit and acid. Enjoy while planning your next golf trip to B.C. \$27 @