

CHALONE

again, naturally

I'M A PARTICULARLY TOUGH JUDGE of Chardonnay and Sangiovese—one's my first love in wine, the other my least favorite varietal. So it's with pleasure that I recommend a winemaker who gets them both right.

Michael Michaud needs no introduction to fans of California's Chalone Vineyards, where he made wine for 17 years. Chalone is so distinctive that it rates its own officially designated growing area, or appellation, and in 1992, Michaud bought some acreage within the zone, which is inland from Monterey. In 1998 he left the Chalone winery to concentrate on making his own wine from the Chalone appellation, and the

results are worth seeking out.

In Michaud's Chardonnay, for example, the tangy mouthfeel and aromas that remind me of wet river rocks are as European as they are American. The dusky cherry color of the Sangiovese signals immediately that this is not another overblown cocktail red. Instead it's a vibrant, dimensional food wine that would be perfect alongside a roasted-pepper pizza or mushroom risotto.

Michaud also offers Pinot Blanc, Syrah and Pinot Noir. Order online or by phone. Chalone used to be a one-winery appellation, but Michaud's writing a tasty new chapter in one of California's most distinctive books. - THOM ELKJER



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