



On the grapevine

with John Fordham

Californians in new challenge

IT'S been a long time between drinks for those who enjoy a glass of Californian wine.

But, pleasingly, that's about to change, with Foster's deciding to import a formidable range of commercial and premium drops from wineries in the Napa Valley, Sonoma County and Carneros that form part of its sprawling global network.

Wines bearing the famous Robert Mondavi insignia were once imported here and one of Foster's original partners Beringer also made efforts to establish a foothold Down Under — but all without success.

Foster's is placing its hopes this time around on two whites and six reds from Chateau St. Jean, Stag's Leap and Etude wineries.

At \$25 a bottle, I'm tipping 2007 Chateau St. Jean Sonoma County Chardonnay will be a hit here. It mirrors the refined, elegant chardonnay style — fruit-driven with oak pleasantly in check — that's rekindled significant interest in the variety here.

The 2007 Stag's Leap Napa Valley Viognier (\$30) and 2005 Chateau St. Jean Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon (\$40) are other smart wines that'll have little trouble attracting interest. And the higher priced reds (\$50-\$120 a bottle) will definitely challenge Australia's finest at their comparable price points.

the wine list



RYMILL

2008 Sauvignon Blanc (\$18)

Sauvignon blanc grows surprisingly well at red-dominated Coonawarra. This wine's intense, crisp, tropical flavours point to specialist handling by winemaker John Innes.

TAYLORS

2005 Jaraman Cabernet Sauvignon (\$29)

First-rate blend of Clare Valley and Coonawarra fruit, delivering an all-round beaut result with rousing flavours, balance and depth.



SCORPO

2006 Chardonnay (\$37)

Now this is something special from the Mornington Peninsula. Delicate oak integration allows the fruit to dance a merry tune that entrances the palate.