

# Robert M. Parker Jr.'s

## The WINE ADVOCATE

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### LANDMARK VINEYARDS

2008 OVERLOOK CHARDONNAY	SONOMA	(\$28.00)	90
2008 DAMARIS RESERVE CHARDONNAY	SONOMA	(\$40.00)	92
2008 LORENZO CHARDONNAY	RUSSIAN RIVER	(\$53.00)	94+
2008 BIEN NACIDO CHARDONNAY	SANTA MARIA	(\$47.00)	91
2008 RODGERS CREEK CHARDONNAY	SONOMA COAST	(\$42.00)	90
2009 GRAND DETOUR PINOT NOIR	SONOMA	(\$40.00)	89
2008 SOLOMON HILLS PINOT NOIR	SANTA BARBARA	(\$55.00)	88
2008 STEEL PLOW SYRAH	SONOMA	(\$30.00)	90

Always reliable winery, Landmark continues to produce a bevy of high class Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs with their only outlier being their single bottling of Syrah. Moreover, in addition to the endearing quality of their wines, Landmark offers realistic pricing. These wines have consistently represented outstanding value.

The Chardonnay portfolio continues to expand and there are now five separate bottlings. The cuvée most likely to be encountered by readers is the **2009 Overlook Chardonnay**, a blend assembled by longtime winemaker Eric Stern for proprietors Mike and Mary Colhoun. Completely accessed from Sonoma fruit (as opposed to several previous examples that came from numerous California appellations), it exhibits a light green/gold color as well as notes of nectarines, white peaches and hints of honey as well as tropical fruits. Medium to full-bodied, pure and fresh with the wood pushed to the background, this dry, classy white should be enjoyed over the next 2-3 years. The **2008 Damaris Reserve Chardonnay** is a blend from the Sangiacomo Vineyard (42%) and Flocchini Vineyard (58%). It reveals a more golden hue than the Overlook as well as notes of tropical fruits, peaches, honeysuckle and brioche. It possesses a fuller-bodied, richer, more authoritative style than the more whimsical Overlook. Drink this serious Chardonnay over the next 3-4 years. A new offering, the **2008 Rodger's Creek Chardonnay** (a primary vineyard source for top flight Syrah for David Ramey) exhibits a light to medium gold color along with lots of honeysuckle, tropical fruit, white currant, peach, poached pear and caramelized apricot aromas. This is a full-bodied, big, exuberant, buttery, richer Chardonnay without the finesse of the Damaris Reserve or the purity and elegance of the Overlook. While it is very interesting, I am not sure readers will enjoy it as much as some of Landmark's other Chardonnays. From one of my favorite sites (made famous by Helen Turley) is the **2008 Lorenzo Chardonnay**. Attractive aromas of citrus oil, lemon butter, orange blossoms, flowers and an unmistakable minerality jump from the glass of this light green/gold-hued wine. Great acids, a consistent

component of this cool site, buttress a rich, flavorful Chardonnay that is reminiscent of a hypothetical blend of white Burgundy and a northern California white. This is a beauty of a complexity (lots of flowers and fruit), structure and depth. Drink it over the next 7-8 years. Filled with tropical fruit characteristics, the extroverted, flamboyant **2008 Bien Nacido Chardonnay** possesses enough background minerality and acidity to provide focus. It is the least concentrated of these Chardonnays, but it offers a wonderful perfume as well as a seductive style. Drink it over the next 1-3 years as it should be the quickest to evolve of all these Chardonnays.

The medium dark, ruby-colored **2009 Grand Detour Pinot Noir** is an intensely fragrant, super spicy effort offering notes of incense, spice box, herbs and Chinese black tea. The distinctive, super-sized aromatics give way to a classic palate revealing flavors of black cherry and berry fruit, silky tannins, decent acidity and a spicy, soft, round finish. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years. Given the overwhelming aromatics, this could be a controversial wine, but its classic flavors should prevail with most Pinot lovers. The **2008 Solomon Hills Pinot Noir** exhibits more jammy red currant and cherry notes intermixed with spice box, herbs and earth. There is even a touch of Pinot Noir herbaceousness and stink to this wine, but I do not mean that in a pejorative sense. It is a well-made, medium-bodied Pinot to drink over the next 3-4 years.

Lastly, a wine that has generally been the weak link in this otherwise impressive portfolio is the **Steel Plow Syrah**. The 2008 may be the finest example of this cuvée that Landmark has yet produced. (Its back label indicates it comes from the Kivelstadt Family Vineyard.) The dense purple-colored 2008 reveals a classic perfume of camphor, pepper, smoke meats, blackberry and cassias. More concentrated than previous versions, with supple tannins as well as abundant purity and richness, it represents a California version of a ripe, full-bodied Crozes-Hermitage from the northern Rhône Valley. Drink it over the next 4-5 years.