

**WineSmith****2002 Faux Chablis
(Napa Valley)**

I pride myself on being rather well versed in the nuances of Burgundy - my greatest love in all winedom. Nowhere else does true *goût de terroir* manifest so vividly than in the communes and crus of Burgundy. However, in the context of my day job with Appellation America, our daily tastings tend to be more narrowly focused on wines from North America (hardly a narrow field!), so I was delighted when this wine was presented to me blind. I immediately went straight to the northern reaches of Burgundian Chardonnay – Chablis. The wine is showing some age with a golden yellow color, but still evident are the characteristic slightly green hues of the region. More evidence of the Chablis origin comes in the nose, which displays the clear regional markings of steely minerality and wet stones with pristine lemony fruit. The aromatic complexities are heightened with tertiary characteristics like honey and beeswax, which only come with graceful bottle age. An additional compliment to the aromatic profile is the very subtle whisper of oak toast – Good Chablis is never over-oaked! The final confirmation that this wine is indeed Chablis comes when it hits the palate with its broad boned (but not fleshy), angular and austere mouthfeel, and that tell-tale northern climate acidity. So I lock in my guess. “Chablis!”

Answer: *Chardonnay, correct. Chablis, wrong.*

In fact, I was a whole half globe off in my guess for origin. The Chardonnay fruit for this wine was grown in the Student Vineyard of the Napa Valley College. But, in the case of this wine, more important than the source appellation is the winemaker, whose intent could not be more explicit. Clark Smith rarely uses AVA designations on his wines, believing they represent little in terms of guaranteeing a regional style. I’m guessing that, with his Napa Valley designation on this bottling, sitting adjacent to the proprietary name “Faux Chablis”, Clark is making a strong statement to this effect, as this wine is as *un-Napa* as they get.

Reviewed November 28, 2007 by [Adam Dial](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [WineSmith](#)
Vintage: 2002
Wine: Faux Chablis
Appellation: [Napa Valley](#)
Grape: Chardonnay
Price: \$30.00

THE REVIEWER**Adam Dial**

Adam Dial is co-founder and Managing Editor of Appellation America. Brought up in a family with winery ventures in both California and Canada, he seeks and appreciates diversity and individuality in wines. He is a Sommelier with more than two decades of experience in the hospitality and service industry, and is a respected wine educator, judge and industry advisor.