

**Mer Soleil Winery****2006 "Silver" - Unoaked Chardonnay  
(Santa Lucia Highlands)**

I applaud the trend toward unoaked Chardonnay, but it sometimes seems to be mostly a marketing gimmick. Chardonnay can be on the bland side, and when there's no oak present, inferior fruit has nothing to hide behind. That's not a problem for the Silver Unoaked Chardonnay from Mer Soleil.

Winemaker and viticulture director Charlie Wagner II uses Chardonnay grapes grown in special blocks of the Mer Soleil Vineyard, which is at the cooler northern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA.

The grapes are harvested when they're just ripe, and the wine is fermented in stainless steel and cement vats. There's no oak contact, and the wine doesn't go through malolactic fermentation. The result is a fresh, vivid Chardonnay with ample pear, lemon, green apple and pineapple flavors. There's plenty of juicy acidity, a hint of minerality and a long finish. Wagner says he's trying to combine the crisp mineral essence of Chablis with the tropical elements of California coastal Chardonnay. I'd say he's succeeded with this wine, which sells for \$42. This is the second vintage of Silver – here's hoping there are many more.

Reviewed July 11, 2007 by [Laurie Daniel](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Mer Soleil Winery](#)

**Vintage:** 2006

**Wine:** "Silver" - Unoaked Chardonnay

**Appellation:** [Santa Lucia Highlands](#)

**Grape:** [Chardonnay](#)

**Price:** \$42.00

**THE REVIEWER****Laurie Daniel**

Laurie Daniel, wine columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News*, has been reviewing wine for more than 10 years. She doesn't use numbers, preferring to describe her recommended wines and let consumers decide for themselves.

Laurie believes that bigger isn't necessarily better; she's partial to wines of balance, finesse and character. Her particular interests are Pinot Noir (versions that really taste like Pinot, that is) and aromatic whites like Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Gewürztraminer.