

FOOD

Fall Wine: 20 Under \$20

The Pour

By ERIC ASIMOV OCT. 22, 2015

A good value is not the same as cheap. You can find decent wines for \$5, \$10 or even \$15, but rarely will you find wines that snap you to attention, fill you with wonder or simply move you by their sheer deliciousness.

For those qualities, which some may regard as luxuries but I believe are necessities, you need to spend a little more, say \$15 to \$25. Today, this range is the bull's-eye for great values in wine.

Focusing on the less expensive end of this range, I've picked 20 excellent bottles, all under \$20. Each was chosen with an eye to the fall season. That doesn't mean they are all red. Even in the depths of winter, our cuisine is varied, and so are the wines that go with those foods. But I've picked fewer whites than I would have in a summer selection, and most of the wines tend to be a little heftier in texture and warmer in character.

This list comprises mostly Old World wines. Some will question this, as so many inexpensive wines are available from regions in the Southern Hemisphere, for example, and North America. Others may wonder why I've included only two American wines. Unless I intend to focus only on one country, I put together each "20 Under \$20" list with no set idea how it should all break down. I look around at retail shops, and include the best wines I try. I don't keep track of origins and I have no quotas.

While I believe I have an open mind, I know this from experience and common sense: Countries that have been making wine for centuries have clear advantages in offering distinctive values. They have far more local traditions in

winemaking, which means that the variety of grapes and styles of wine in France, Italy or Spain far surpass what are available from the United States.

In addition — for reasons of real estate, the cost of doing business and tradition — small estates, which tend to make more interesting inexpensive wines than corporate producers, have an easier time keeping prices low in Europe than in the United States. Some fine American producers who have conscientiously tried to offer great values have difficulty today keeping prices under \$20 a bottle. Those that can sell their wines quickly.

Without question Americans can compete in producing some of the greatest wines in the world. Producing great values for less than \$20 may be a bigger challenge.

**La Pepière Muscadet Sèvre et Maine Sur Lie Clos de Briords
Cuvée Vieilles Vignes 2014 \$17.99**

Any list of great wine values could conceivably begin and end with Muscadet. La Pepière is among Muscadet's best producers, and Clos de Briords, a single-vineyard plot of old vines, is among the region's best cuvées. This is a concentrated, richly textured, resonant wine, with great minerality and flavors of herbs and citrus. It's great now but will reward aging. (Louis/Dressner Selections, New York)

**Domaine de la Grande Colline Vin de Table de France Le Canon
2013 \$19.99**

If you are curious about “natural wine,” here is an excellent example of a wine made with nothing added, nothing taken out. This pale red, a blend of syrah and grenache, is pure, earthy, dry and refreshing, with aromas and flavors of flowers and red fruit. It has no sulfur dioxide, conventionally used as a preservative, so keep it cool. Instead, it has a bit of fizzy carbon dioxide, so decant first. (Zev Rovine Selections/Fruit of the Vines, Long Island City, N.Y.)

Bodega Cauzón Spain Mozuelo 2014 \$19.99

Another natural wine, from that hotbed of natural wine production, Andalusia, in the south of Spain. This vibrant, juicy, savory garnacha (as grenache is rendered in Castilian) is the first I've had from there. It's crisp, floral and herbal, with a refreshing touch of bitterness. Unusually for garnacha (and

southern Spain), it's just 12.5 percent alcohol. (Selections de la Viña/T. Elenteny Imports, New York)

Ermitage du Pic St.-Loup Languedoc Tour de Pierres 2013 \$18.99

This red, a sturdy, dark blend of grenache, mourvèdre and syrah, is redolent of earthy, herbal aromas and flavors of red fruits and stony minerals. Languedoc produces wines both indifferent and overly ambitious, but this one gets it just right with a genuine sense of place. Give it some air when you open it, and serve with stews and roasted meats. (Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, Berkeley, Calif.)

Shinn Estate North Fork of Long Island Mojo Cabernet Franc 2014 \$17.99

This is exactly the sort of good, fresh local wine that I want to down by the jugful. Did I say jug? I know, it has connotations of bad, cheap wine. Yet this is lovely, juicy and fresh, with crisp, crunchy red fruit flavors, earthy nuances and a refreshingly bitter note of completion.

Domaine Maestracci Corse Calvi E Prove 2013 \$19.99

I've recently been obsessed with the distinctive wines of Corsica. This white, made of vermentinu, as vermentino is rendered in Corsican, comes from the E Prove area on a high plateau near Calvi in the northwest of the island. It is clean, lively and energetic, with flavors of nuts and yellow fruits. As the wine warms, its fleshy texture and minerality emerge, so don't serve it too cold. (Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant)

Loxarel Penedès Brut Nature Rosado Reserva 999 NV \$18.99

One must have bubbly, and good cava is one of the best values in sparkling wine. This rosé sparkler (technically not a cava because the producer does not use the term) is bone-dry and ultra-refreshing. It's pale ruby in color and made of 60 percent xarello, the genre's most distinctive grape, and 40 percent pinot noir, a Champagne grape that has encroached in cava country. No matter: This has the light, lacy texture of good cava and plenty of flavor. (USA Wine Imports, New York)

Peter Lauer Saar Riesling Barrel X 2014 \$18.99

This exceptional value is the entry-level bottle of a superb Saar producer. It

offers just a pleasant touch of residual sugar, the equivalent, maybe, of a kabinett-level riesling, along with exquisite balance and depth, great minerality and a combination of floral and fruit flavors. (Vom Boden/T. Elenteny Imports, New York)

Domaine Ilarria Irouléguy Rosé 2014 \$19.99

This is one of my favorite rosés. Peio Espil farms his limestone hillside vineyard in the extreme southwest of France with meticulous care and works in the cellar as naturally as possible. The result is a rosé the color of pale blood, rich with the elemental flavors of iron and minerals. A summer wine? This is a cold-weather rosé if ever there was one, and it will improve with aging. (A Thomas Calder Selection/Moonlight Wine, New York)

**Bernabeleva Vinos de Madrid Camino de Navaherreros 2014
\$14.99**

Vinos de Madrid doesn't actually mean this comes from the Spanish capital. The grapes, old-vine garnacha, are grown about an hour west of the city, and the wine is absolutely delicious: juicy yet tannic, with good acidity and minerality. Bring on the roasted meats. (The Rare Wine Company, Brisbane, Calif.)

**Domaine Vincent Dureuil-Janthial Bourgogne Passetoutgrain
2013 \$17.99**

Bourgogne Passetoutgrain is a wine intended for thirst-quenching early drinking. It also belies the notion that Burgundy must always be made of a single grape. Red Passetoutgrain must be a blended wine, generally one-third pinot noir to two-thirds gamay, but this pretty wine from an excellent producer is almost 90 percent pinot noir. It smells like rose petals and tastes of sweet red fruit, with a core of minerals. For gulping. (Skurnik Wines, New York)

Ferrando Erbaluce di Caluso 2012 \$17.99

Explore the vineyards of Italy, and you'll never know what grapes you'll discover. In the northern Piedmont in the northwest, around the town of Caluso, you're liable to run across erbaluce, which makes great sweet wines and excellent dry whites, like this vibrant, flinty, floral beauty. With a little more of a weighty texture than you may expect and very good acidity, it's a nice white for salumi. (Rosenthal Wine Merchant, New York)

Sign Up for the Cooking Newsletter

Receive occasional updates and special offers for The New York Times's products and services.

No soy un robot

reCAPTCHA
Privacidad - Condiciones

[See Sample](#)

[Manage Email Preferences](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

Alain Coudert Clos de la Roilette Fleurie Cuvée Christal 2014

\$19.99

Belying its flowery name and the stereotype of easygoing Beaujolais, good Fleurie is often a structured wine that takes a few years to come around. Christal, unlike Alain Coudert's longer-lived cuvées, is soft and delightfully accessible. It's beautifully floral, with a center of earthy red fruit. (Louis Dressner Selections)

Fattoria di Sannontana Chianti 2012 \$18.99

This is straightforward, delicious Chianti, without pretense or polish. Who can't use that? It's made almost entirely of sangiovese, with a little canaiolo and colorino added, and offers firm, pure flavors of flowers, cherries and earth, with firm tannins that grip pleasantly as you swallow. (Grand Cru Selections, New York)

Château d'Epiré Savennières 2013 \$19.99

Savennières is one of the great expressions of chenin blanc, an austere, tightly wound counterpart of the joyously outgoing Vouvray. Many Savennières require a few years of aging before they open up, but this one is immediately accessible, with flavors of beeswax, minerals and that wet wool quality so beloved of Savennières fans. (Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant)

Domaine le Couroulu Vacqueyras Cuvée Classique 2012 \$19.99

This luscious blend of grenache, syrah and mourvère is a quintessential

southern Rhône reminiscent of the era before so many of the wines turned into fruit bombs. Dry, well structured and absolutely delicious, it conjures up images of log fires and roasted meats. Contrast it with the Ermitage du Pic St.-Loup: same grapes, different places. (Verity Wine Partners, New York)

Broadside Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 \$15.99

Broadside is a perennial 20 Under \$20 favorite. This one is a departure, made by a slightly different winemaking team, and not all the grapes are sourced from the Margarita Vineyard. Yet it still possesses the hallmark character of a classically shaped California cabernet, with freshness, fruit, herbal accents and just enough tannins to give it a little grip. Bravo.

Equipo Navazos Jerez Fino En Rama \$17.99 375 ml.

An affordable sherry from Equipo Navazos, the great sherry négociant, which bottles specific lots it has singled out for high quality. This fino is surprisingly rich, concentrated and wonderfully intricate. The term “En Rama” indicates it was bottled with little or no filtering, and it is amazing how much more textured and dimensional this is compared with generic, filtered fino. (European Cellars, Charlotte, N.C.)

Clos la Coutale Cahors 2013 \$16.99

Though inky black, this is not the ferocious Cahors of legend (and fact), but an earthy, accessible wine that will give you a sense of malbec from southwestern France rather than Argentina. What’s the difference? Less soft, sweet fruit, more structure, restraint and nuance. Serve this with fatty meats on a cold, rainy day. (Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant)

Mas Marer Montsant 2012 \$14.99

This great value comes from the husband-and-wife team of Sara Perez and Rene Barbier Jr., who are second-generation Priorat producers. Montsant, a Priorat neighbor, makes less imposing wines than Priorat’s, like this one, primarily garnacha and syrah along with some cabernet sauvignon and merlot. It’s rich and hearty, with juicy red fruit and underlying notes of herbs and minerals. (Weygandt-Metzler, Unionville, Pa.)

Email: asimov@nytimes.com. And follow Eric Asimov on Twitter: @EricAsimov.

A version of this article appears in print on October 28, 2015, on page D4 of the New York edition with the headline: Fall Wines: 20 for Under \$20.

© 2016 The New York Times Company