

Alternative Old World Wines at a Bargain

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
January 2020

Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$15 or less

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Can you believe the year is 2020? A hundred years ago, our fellow Americans were entering the decade of rowdy parties, free-flowing alcohol -- if you knew the password -- and plenty of scantily clad women who liked to have fun. But we wouldn't know anything about that kind of partying here, would we? Unfortunately for the average man, January 17, 1920, was the day Prohibition went into effect, and alcohol sales across the country would cease until 13 years later. It was a dark time for wine lovers, who lost access to their beloved bottles.

As we come into 2020, let's celebrate our freedom to drink as we please by experimenting with our wine selections. We've come a long way in the past century and we have a world of wine options at our fingertips almost everywhere we go. We're not restrained in our choices by what is made in the backyard. So put aside the trusty California Cabernet and Chardonnay, and let's get experimental to start off the new decade with these alternative Old World bargain bottles under \$10.

Starting with the lightest white is the **Seastone Vinho Verde** out of Portugal. With a slight

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effervescence, Vinho Verde is a perfect Miami wine. It's crisp, weightless, and reminds me of the feeling of wearing white linen on a hot summer day. It won't stick but feels refreshing and clean against the tongue. This is a nothing-complicated, easy-breezy kind of wine.

For a glass of something white with a little more weight, reach for the **2018 Marqués De Riscal Rueda Verdejo** from Spain. Rueda Verdejos are often a great value. At a price point below eight dollars, this wine is a steal. It's full of tropical fruit and citrus, and just a touch of bitterness on the finish for balance. Marqués De Riscal's Verdejo is bursting with sun-shining brightness and is a welcomed refreshment.

Get really geeky with an unusual white wine when you drink the **2014 Bosco Pecorino**. This wine was on the bottom shelf at Publix, but that is definitely not where it belongs. Pecorino is a white grape from Italy that you don't hear much about, but it is fun to include here. This one is golden yellow with a honeyed floral aroma, coating the mouth with a thick, buttery body. Though the flavors have hints of honey, dried fruit, and flowers, the wine is completely dry. Serve chilled with buttered seafood like scallops or thick white fish.

Move over Sangiovese, there's a new pizza wine in town, and it's the **2017 Caleo Salice Salentino** out of Puglia, Italy. This blend of Negroamaro and Malvasia Nera grapes is full of aromas of candied black cherries and spice, with flavors of dried red fruit and licorice. It's smooth but intense, and though it's an Italian wine, it paired perfectly with a French favorite, coq au vin.

Would you rather drink a French wine? We have a couple just for you. The **2017 King Rabbit Malbe** c has a cute name but is anything but fluffy. It's actually rather plump and boldly juicy, with ripe plum and cherry flavors, sticky tannins, and a dark and brooding finish. King Rabbit is a great-value Malbec from France that is surprisingly fruit-forward for an Old World wine.

The **2016 Ma Fiancée Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre** sounds romantic, and it is. Reminiscent of cherry Twizzlers, Ma Fiancée is a Rhône-style blend that goes down delicately with succulent strawberry and cherry flavors and a rounded body. I would describe this as a super easy-drinking wine that doesn't need food to be enjoyed.

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One last Old World alternative wine, and this one is from Spain. The **2017 Bodegas Atalaya “Laya” Red Blend** consists of 70 percent Garnacha Tintorera and 30 percent Monastrell. Far from the light-hearted romance of the previous GSM, Laya is a passionately dark wine, with grippy tannins that hold on to the sides of your cheeks like a desperate lover. It’s higher in alcohol with a heaviness to its aromas, and concentrated flavors of ripe red fruits. This wine is not shy and is perfect for those not easily intimidated by intensity.

Cheers to the New Year, new decade, and the freedom to explore a world of wine in 2020!

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