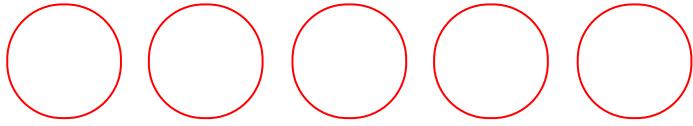


# 15 Great \$15 Wines: For Oenophiles on a Budget



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**Looking for the best wine values? Focus on your wine store's sweet spot: the \$15 range. Lettie Teague found some of the season's finest buys there.**

By

Lettie Teague

You can't get too far on \$15 these days—a soda and sandwich, maybe, or a movie ticket for one (hold the popcorn). But \$15 can still get you a nice bottle of red, white, rosé or even sparkling wine. The price-quality ratio of wine is particularly high at the moment. If you know where to look, you can find plenty of good \$15 bottles from regions all over the world.

It might mean exploring a grape or a style of wine you've never tasted before (sparkling rosé from South Africa?), but it might also mean buying a type of wine that's tried-and-true, such as Oregon Pinot Gris or Argentine Malbec. Italy is currently a particularly fertile source of great buys for the buck. The \$15 bottles I tasted came from around the world and the following 15 met my criteria of deliciousness and drinkability. They may not be profound, but they're definitely pleasurable—not to mention highly affordable.



### A. 2015 Gianni Gagliardo "Fallegro" Bianco

The Gagliardo family were some of the biggest champions of the white Favorita (Vermentino) grape, which had all but disappeared from the Piedmont region of Italy when they took on the task of bringing about its revival. The wine they make from it is charming and slightly frizzante (partway between still and sparkling.)

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### B. 2015 Luigi Pira Dolcetto d'Alba

Marked by juicy red-berry fruit, the Luigi Pira estate's Dolcetto is truly delicious. There are plenty more serious wines made in Piedmont but this one is a full-out pleasure to drink.

### C. 2015 Zorzal Malbec Terroir Unico

You can find lots of simple, high-alcohol Argentine Malbec fruit bombs on the market; this is thankfully not one of them. Produced in a high-altitude Mendoza vineyard, it's a much more subtle, earthy, minerally Malbec and great with food.

### D. 2016 Château Riotor Côtes de Provence Rosé

Here's a textbook example of a Provençal rosé. From its pale-salmon color to its lively acidity and fragrant red-berry nose, this Grenache- and Cinsault-dominant blend is a terrific last-rosé-of-the-summer choice.

#### E. 2016 Whitehaven Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc

The Marlborough region of New Zealand is home to many reliably good Sauvignon Blancs, including this approachable, medium-bodied wine from Whitehaven.



#### F. 2016 Gini Soave Classico

There is an ongoing renaissance of Soave, the once-scorned commercial white wine from Italy's Veneto region, and Gini is among the producers who have restored its reputation. Their basic Soave Classico is a crisp, fragrant delight.

#### G. 2013 Gregorina Sangiovese di Romagna Superiore

Though the Sangiovese grape is most often associated with Tuscany, it's grown successfully in other regions of Italy too. This appealing, slightly earthy example comes from the Gregorina winery in Emilia-Romagna.

#### H. Graham Beck Brut Rosé Western Cape Non Vintage

This sparkling blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay was made by the same process as Champagne by top South African producer Graham Beck. Marked by lively notes of raspberry fruit, it's a luscious and easy drink.

### I. 2015 Valle dell'Acate Il Frappato

Producer Valle dell'Acate produces one of my favorite renditions of the native Sicilian red grape Frappato. A bright and toothsome red with a pleasingly bitter note, it's best served with a bit of a chill, like Beaujolais.

### J. 2015 Willamette Valley Vineyards Pinot Gris

Though Oregon's Pinot Noir gets most of the attention, Pinot Gris, the state's workhorse grape, regularly delivers ripe, sometimes slightly tropical and eminently drinkable wines like this one from Willamette Valley Vineyards.



### K. Nino Franco Rustico Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore

The popularity of Prosecco remains strong, and Nino Franco's non-vintage Prosecco Rustico is a reliable one. A very crisp, very dry and relatively light bodied take on Prosecco and an excellent aperitif.

### L. 2016 Schloss Gobelsburg Cisterciense Rosé

While Austria has long been renowned for Grüner Veltliner, this country's producers grow more than one grape and make more than one type of wine. Witness this very pretty and fragrant rosé made at a Cistercien monastery estate, one of Austria's oldest wineries, from Zweigelt, St. Laurent and Pinot Noir grapes.

#### M. 2015 Bortoluzzi Pinot Grigio

With a bit more body and weight than the typical Pinot Grigio, this one from the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region in northern Italy is a dry, well balanced wine with surprising persistence and length.

#### N. 2014 Beckmen Vineyards Cuvee Le Bec Santa Ynez Valley

This Rhône-style red from Beckmen Vineyards is simply a terrific wine for the price. A soft, approachable, Syrah-dominant blend from California's Central Coast, it's marked by lush dark-red fruit and notes of pepper and spice.

#### O. 2016 Collestefano Verdicchio di Matelica

Verdicchio is a key white grape in the Marche region of Italy. Matelica produces some of its best examples—in particular, those from winemaker Fabio Marchionni of Collestefano. This 2016 is a delightfully bright, zingy expression of the grape.