

## 15 Italian Reds for \$20 or Less

New reviews of value picks from Tuscany, Sicily, Campania and more



Vineyard workers are ready for harvest at Rapitalà in Sicily. Their spicy 2014 Syrah is a great value at just \$18.

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Posted: March 16, 2017

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*Tasting Highlights bring the best wines from our editors' most recent tastings to WineSpectator.com members.*

Lovers of Italian wine have never had it so good. Ever more Italian wines are coming to the United States, and there's ample opportunity to explore the country's output via high quality and affordable examples.

Italy grows hundreds of native grapes alongside better-known international varieties. Adventurous drinkers might try a brambly Aglianico from the Campania region outside of Naples, a bottling of Abruzzo's aromatic Montepulciano grape or a bright, light-bodied red based on the Corvina grape from Valpolicella in the north.

For those interested in more familiar—yet still distinctly Italian—territory, look to Sangiovese. It's grown widely in regions throughout central Italy, as well as outlying pockets in other areas. It makes up the base of Tuscany's Chianti, but it's also bottled individually or in blends with international varieties.

Like producers in most of the wine world, Italy's winemakers enjoy putting their stamp on classic French varieties. In particular, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot enjoy success in western Tuscany's coastal Bolgheri and Maremma regions; typically lighter-bodied, more elegant versions hail from parts of northern Italy.

From bright and crisp to rich and robust, Italian wine offers something for almost every occasion or food pairing. We discovered a grab bag of delicious examples in our recent tastings, highlighting the stylistic range and affordability available from the country today.

**SANT'ELENA Cabernet Sauvignon Venezia-Giulia 2010 Score: 91 | \$20**

Aromatic accents of dried mint and eucalyptus lace flavors of black cherry, espresso crème, olive tapenade and citrus zest in this expressive, medium- to full-bodied red. Well-knit, with refined tannins and a lingering finish. Drink now through 2027. 2,600 cases made.—A.N.

**AMPELEIA Costa Toscana Unlitro 2015 Score: 90 | \$20/1L**

This is light-weight, yet intense and concentrated, boasting cherry, herb and earth flavors. Picks up a saline element on the chewy finish. Alicante Nero and Carignano. Drink now through 2023. 8,333 cases made.—B.S.

**CARPINETO Chianti Classico 2015 Score: 90 | \$19**

Expressive aromas of cherry, leather and tobacco start things off, while a mineral element chimes in on the palate. Elegant, firm and balanced, with a pure cherry note lingering on the finish. Best from 2018 through 2028. 2,500 cases made.—B.S.

**SANT'ELENA Merlot Venezia-Giulia 2010 Score: 90 | \$20**

There's good interplay between the ripe and juicy black currant fruit in this medium-bodied red, accented by a savory range of expressive grilled herb, olive and smoke. Rich, with creamy tannins firming the finish. Drink now through 2025. 2,500 cases made.—A.N.

**CERALTI Bolgheri Scirè 2015 Score: 89 | \$18**

This expressive red oozes with black cherry, blueberry and spice flavors. Not complex or long, but the fruit is fresh and there is good structure underneath. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Drink now through 2022. 3,000 cases made.—B.S.

**BRIGALDARA Valpolicella 2015 Score: 88 | \$14**

Appealing flavors of ripe strawberry and cream are accented by dried herb and smoke notes and enlivened by tangy acidity in this lightly chewy, light-bodied red. Drink now through 2019. 15,000 cases made.—A.N.

**CA' DEL SARTO Toscana Ardente 2015 Score: 88 | \$11**

Enticing aromas of cherry, plum, leather and earth accent the sweet, ripe fruit in this open red. Turns spicy by the finish. Sangiovese and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now. 3,000 cases made.—B.S.

**ANTONIO CAGGIANO Aglianico Irpinia Tari 2015 Score: 88 | \$18**

This zesty red shows a hint of spritz up front, along with floral and spice notes that accent the bright and brambly berry, cherry and earth flavors. Tangy. Drink now through 2019. 3,083 cases made.—A.N.

**CONTESSA Montepulciano d'Abruzzo 2014 Score: 88 | \$17**

Crushed and candied black raspberry fruit is set in a medium-bodied frame and accented by anise, olive and dried thyme notes. Fresh and focused, with light, sculpted tannins. Drink now through 2020. 7,500 cases made.—A.N.

**DREI DONÀ Sangiovese Forlì Notturmo 2014 Score: 88 | \$17**

A harmonious, light- to medium-bodied red that layers fresh acidity and light, sculpted tannins with a subtle weave of ripe black cherry, grilled thyme and graphite notes. Drink now through 2020. 5,000 cases made.—A.N.

**MATANÉ Primitivo Puglia 2015 Score: 88 | \$10**

This is medium-bodied and expressive, with ground coffee, vanilla and rich smoke notes layered with ripe dried strawberry and cherry flavors. Offers a well-spiced, chewy finish. Drink now through 2020. 3,330 cases made.—A.N.

**RAPITALÀ Syrah Sicilia Nadir 2014 Score: 88 | \$18**

A subtle, creamy red, offering layers of blackberry and boysenberry fruit, spicy mineral, dried thyme and smoke. Fresh and focused, with light, sculpted tannins firming the finish. Drink now through 2020. 385 cases imported.—A.N.

**TOSCOLO Chianti Classico 2014 Score: 88 | \$16**

Black cherry and violet flavors mark this fruity, straightforward red. Balanced and set for early enjoyment. Drink now through 2019. 3,000 cases made.—B.S.

**CARPINETO Toscana Dogajolo 2015 Score: 87 | \$15**

A mix of black currant, cedar, herb and saline flavors matches the dense, lightly tannic structure. Persists on the finish, with lingering fruit. Sangiovese and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now. 6,000 cases made.—B.S.

**VITO CURATOLO ARINI Nero d'Avola Terre Siciliane Paccamora 2015 Score: 87 | \$10**

A bright and brambly red, balanced and easy-drinking, with crushed blackberry, spice and aromatic herb notes. Lightly chewy. Drink now through 2019. 12,000 cases made.—A.N.

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